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CASTLES IN THE AIR;

OR, THE

WHIMS OF MY AUNT.

VOL. I.

Printed by S. Hamilton, Whitefriars.

CASTLES IN THE AIR;

OR, THE

WHIMS OF MY AUNT.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

"DUNETHVIN; OR, A VISIT TO PARIS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1818.

CASTLES IN THE AIR;

OR, THE

WHIMS OF MY AUNT.

CHAPTER I.

See some fit passion ev'ry age supply,
Hope travels through, nor quits us when we die.
* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
Meanwhile Opinion gilds with varying rays
Those painted clouds that beautify our days:
Each want of happiness by Hope supplied,
And each vacuity of sense by Pride:
These build as fast as knowledge can destroy;
In Folly's cup still laughs the bubble joy:
One prospect lost, another still we gain;
And not a vanity is giv'n in vain.

POPE.

——————I sum up half mankind,
And add two thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams!

COWPER.

"WHEN Charles shall have brought me the Persian manuscript of Hafiz the

poet, I shall quite outrival Lady Blandish with her favourite Chinese characters, which have puzzled one half of the learned world, and filled the other half with envy and malice," said Mrs. Denningham, half unconscious that she was then thinking aloud, while her hands were busily employed (as if mechanically) in knitting a purse.

"Did you speak to me, aunt?" inquired a fine handsome boy, who sat opposite to the soliloquist, engaged at her desire in drawing a map of Asia.

"Yes, my love, I am thinking what I should like you to bring me from Persia," said she; "I mean when you go in the suite of the ambassador, as I make no doubt you will: you will then of course have great interest, and may

perhaps be able to gain me that inestimable treasure, the manuscript poems of Hafiz in the original language."

"Dear aunt, you are not going to send me to Persia, are you?" said Charles Denningham, in utter amazement, and yet with something of an arch expression lurking in his dark eyes, as he raised them towards the countenance of his aunt.

Charles Denningham was, at the time now alluded to, just of an age to observe the peculiarities and frequent fits of absence, which were but too evident in the conduct of Mrs. Denningham, who had long acquired the habit of amusing herself by laying plans for the future, while the present time was by her totally disregarded: her life had

been, what may well be termed a varied dream of wild chimeras, and fanciful illusions.—Too often the valuable blessings of leisure, health, and competence had been idly wasted in the pursuit of some favourite plan, neither advantageous to herself nor others. She had weakened a noble mind, and frittered away a superior understanding by these frivolous and vain pursuits, in *all* of which it was impossible for her to succeed, however successful she might be in part. Disappointment had tinctured her disposition with a melancholy, which was not natural to it; for her early youth had given a promise of brilliant talents, and uncommon wit and vivacity; but a lively imagination, entirely uncontrolled, had long banished that more intrinsic merit, sound sense, and launched its fair possessor on a world of improbability and

folly. She had for years been the willing dupe of the wild phantoms, which existed only in her own inventive brain: she had lived in an ideal world; and this she had compared so frequently with the passing events of that she in reality existed in, that she sometimes persuaded herself, that not only the inhabitants, but the whole system of the earth itself was changed from what it was formerly. "All could not be right, or why should she be so often misled in her opinions?" she would mentally exclaim. She staid not to consider the utter impracticability of her various schemes, and the consequent disappointment which must inevitably follow them: she again wove the fragile web of fancy, and again amused herself with plans, which were as certainly to be frustrated. Yet, amidst this career of folly, Mrs. Denningham had

preserved a generous heart, a kind and gentle disposition: keenly alive to the dictates of affection and compassion, she had not scrupled to sacrifice her own interest, her own ideas of comfort, to befriend the helpless orphan, or to serve the afflicted mourner. For this, and many other traits of character equally favourable, she had gained the esteem of those, who knew enough of her real excellence to enable them to overlook the singularity of her conduct in many respects, and the frequent eccentricity of her manners and way of reasoning. She was beloved by her relatives and dependents, but ridiculed by the unthinking, and set down by the generality of her acquaintance as "a complete quiz, a crack-brained visionary:" they contented themselves with laughing at the follies of Mrs. Denningham, but

they sought not to imitate her many virtues.

At the commencement of this narrative, she had attained her fortieth year; and, having resigned the maiden title of Miss, had assumed that more sedate distinction of Mrs. She had had many offers in her youthful days; but among all her admirers, finding none who came up to her idea of excellence, (founded on romance, and existing only in the imagination,) she had determined to continue unmarried. This rather singular determination many of her relations were surprised at, but none attempted to dissuade her from; each hoping that the large fortune she was known to possess would in time fall to their share. But these selfish anticipations were suddenly baffled by the untimely death of

Mrs. Denningham's sister-in-law; who, in giving birth to her third child, had given up her own valued existence, and left a disconsolate husband and three lovely children to sustain her irreparable loss.

As the wife of her brother, the late Mrs. Denningham, had been beloved in life, and in death claimed the grief of our amiable visionary, who felt and acknowledged the virtues of the deceased with all that candour and warmth which had ever strongly marked her very singular character; she affectionately soothed the deep affliction of her brother, and promised to become a tender guardian to his helpless infants, the eldest of whom was not, at the death of their mother, more than six years of age.

Unable as he was himself to superin-

tend the management of so young a family, Mr. Denningham gladly embraced the well-meant offer of his sister; and consigned his infant darlings to the entire care of their aunt, with the most unbounded confidence in her tenderness towards those lovely orphans, whom from that hour Mrs. Denningham determined to consider as her own. She hesitated not to declare it her intention to divide the whole of her property equally among them.

This liberality to her nephew and nieces did not fail to dissipate the bright hopes of her mercenary relations; who had previously courted her favour with unabated assiduity, and scrupled not to countenance, by their flattery, the many ridiculous caprices which they secretly laughed at and despised: they hoped

thus to hoodwink her judgment, and, by indulging her follies, to ensure their own selfish plans and skilful calculations; but they had unwittingly deceived themselves. Instead of making Mrs. Denningham their dupe, as they had intended, she saw through their shallow devices and mean contemptible artifices; and she resolved to dispose of her large fortune to more satisfactory purposes, by bequeathing it to more deserving objects. Her brother, she knew, could himself have well provided for his children, had not severe losses of late much impaired his income: but she likewise knew the extreme uncertainty of West-India property; she had herself sometimes experienced this in the irregularity with which her own remittances were paid from the same estates, and managed by the same agent as Mr. Denning-

ham's. Her brother was young; he might marry again, she argued: another family would then have claims on him; and she could not endure the idea of her little favourites being under the control of a stepmother; having the unjust prejudice which many indulge in, that a second wife seldom if ever behaves with kindness to the children of the first.

Disregarding the insinuations of her pretended friends, that she would soon repent of encumbering herself with the care of a family not her own, and that the charge of such infants would be attended with great inconvenience to one of her peculiar turn of mind, Mrs. Denningham set about arranging the domestic establishment of her household for the reception of her little nephew and nieces. A commodious suite of apart-

ments was fitted up for them and their attendants, with the strictest regard to their health and comfort: she herself superintended every thing, that she might the better attend to the preparations for receiving those interesting objects of her affection: for them she threw aside her former favourite pursuits, and became more than commonly domestic and devoted to her family affairs.

As soon as possible after the funeral of their ill-fated mother, Charles, Laura, and the infant Julia were removed from their father's splendid but now desolate mansion to that of their worthy aunt.

Mrs. Denningham with difficulty overcame the reluctance of the affectionate father to part with these lovely pledges of former happiness. He could not re-

sign the children of his beloved, but now departed Julia, without a pang of regret; not even to his own amiable sister, much as he loved her. He yet felt the deepest grief when the attendants bore them from that dwelling which had hitherto sheltered them, and where the fond bosom of a tender parent had so lately fostered them. He doubted not the tenderness of their aunt, and that she would zealously endeavour to supply the loss of her who had till now watched over them with all a mother's fond anxiety; but, bereaved of the society of his children, the last hope of comfort seemed snatched from the wretched widower.

Mrs. Denningham perceived the inward struggle, and, pitying the sufferings of her brother, entreated him to make

her house his home, at least for the first few months after their removal. She hoped the change of scene, and the satisfaction of beholding his children continually, would wean him from his present melancholy reflections.

Her proposal was gladly accepted; and, in the superintendence of his son's education, and the affectionate endearments of his little girls, Mr. Denningham in time forgot the first poignancy of his grief, and passed his hours more agreeably than he could once have thought possible after the death of his wife.

As before mentioned, the eldest of Mrs. Denningham's children was but six years of age when deprived of her maternal care by her sudden and unex-

pected death; the second child, Laura, was just three years younger than her brother Charles; the third, the infant Julia, never knew a mother's love, a mother's fond embrace: death had snatched its victim ere she had the power to welcome the hapless babe, or imprint one fervent kiss of affection on its innocent lips.

Charles, from being the only boy, became the pride and delight of his father, who regarded him as his greatest hope, the object of his love and ambition. Mr. Denningham believed he could, even at that early age, trace in the expanding faculties of his son the bright promise of superior talents: the cultivation of his mind would require peculiar attention while young; if well directed in his pursuit of knowledge, he

might one day become an ornament to society, and a blessing to himself.

Such were the fair promises of earthly happiness, which brightened the prospects of future years to Mr. Denningham; but not two years had elapsed; ere the fallacy of these hopes was proved by the dread certainty, that he should never behold these bright visions realized: he was called from the contemplation of terrestial bliss to that of celestial purity.

After the death of her brother, Mrs. Denningham became, if possible, still more devoted to his orphan children, who now had only her to be their guide and protection. They had indeed, other relations, but none who interested themselves for their welfare beyond what

selfish motives could dictate; and who would have totally disregarded them, but from the wish to have the guardianship of their property: none, from affection only, would have given a home to these helpless babes. Not being very nearly related, they felt not the tie of affection, which Mrs. Denningham did; they looked only to the emolument, which would arise from having the estates of their deceased relative under their own management; for it was not then generally known how much his fortune had been impaired.

Mr. Denningham, at the earnest request of his sister, had placed his daughters under her sole guardianship; and while his son was under the age of ten years, he too was to reside with his aunt: but after that period, till he should

be of age, Charles Denningham was to be under the joint guardianship of Mrs. Denningham, and sir George Alvington, a gentleman who had contrived, by a pleasing address, and an assumption of those virtues he in fact did not possess, to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of the late Mr. Denningham, to whom he was distantly related.

Mrs. Denningham was certainly the most affectionate and natural guardian that her brother could have selected for his children, and her anxiety for their welfare in every respect never abated; but the extreme variability of her mind, the unsteadiness, caprice, and folly, which in such frequent instances guided her conduct, rendered her the most unfit person in the world to superintend the management of children. She

was ever changing her plans either with regard to their health or education. Every new whim of fashion or custom prevalent among her numerous acquaintance she was eager to adopt; her own better judgment was rendered entirely useless by the silly predilection for every thing that was new: change (if I may so express myself) seemed the rule of her life: always fancying, that what another adopted must be better than her own method, she was never steady to any one plan, however rational. To such a height of folly did she carry this ridiculous conceit, that had not the children been of naturally robust constitutions, they must have fallen victims to her various experiments, all meant solely for their good.

At one time, she was told by a female

friend, that it was best to inure the children to the cold of the climate they inhabited, and, of course, to commence by lessening the warmth of their clothing, and to use the cold bath frequently. This in itself might be very proper, if acted upon with due precaution; but unfortunately it was late in the autumn when the plan was suggested; and just at the time when they should have commenced the use of their winter habiliments, the little Denninghams were stripped of even a part of their summer clothing, and with only a thin cambric frock and petticoat, no gloves or stockings, they were exposed to the baleful influence of the cold autumnal blast. This extravagant whim, as may be supposed, failed not to disappoint our visionary: with the utmost consternation she found that, instead of becom-

ing more healthy, the children were seized with severe colds, attended with fever to an alarming degree. After the first danger of this attack was past, Mrs. Denningham resolved to hasten to town, and consult the most eminent physicians, for the recovery of their health: this was at length effected, except that a teasing cough still continued to weaken the delicate frame of the infant Julia. This was a source of anxiety to Mrs. Denningham, which would not admit of consolation. It was in vain she was told the child would gradually get the better of this complaint: not content with the prescriptions of the medical gentlemen who attended her niece, she retarded her recovery, by successively administering every sort of julep, powder, and mixture, which she heard recommended as a sovereign remedy by

her numerous acquaintance: she even attended the infant herself, that all might be given it which she falsely judged would be beneficial. Her own health and spirits were materially injured by her over anxiety and self-reproach for having acted in the manner she had done; but this did not give her the experience one should have expected: she lamented the having caused her darling so much suffering, but was as ready again as ever to be led away by some new caprice.

A lady was condoling with her one day on the anxiety she lately experienced, and entreated her to adopt her method of treating children.—"For my part, I never suffer my little ones to go out the whole winter," said she; "they never leave the house."

"Never go out! what not in the carriage?" exclaimed Mrs. Denningham; "surely that plan cannot succeed. What! never take the fresh air for so many months together?" added she with evident surprise and doubt.

The visitor then proceeded to explain her peculiar way of management, which was to have a large and airy suite of apartments fitted up, and never suffer her children to go beyond them during the winter, not even to take an airing in the carriage. This was certainly not so decidedly dangerous as the plan Mrs. Denningham had lately adopted; but she feared it would make her little nephew and his sisters extremely delicate. The method however was certainly new, quite unlike any former one she had ever heard of; it might therefore be

beneficial: she would try it, she was resolved: it could not injure the dear little creatures for one winter only. Thus she argued; and in spite of her own exclamation of surprise at the bare mention of such a singular way of proceeding, she immediately adopted it.

At another time, having heard that the food of children should be sparingly given, especially animal food, and that each child should be allowed to eat only a certain quantity, by no means to be exceeded, Mrs. Denningham, according to this new suggested plan, had the meat allowed to each weighed in her presence, that not the least mistake should be made: these portions were not (even to the eldest) to exceed an ounce and half; and, spite of all their

entreaties, she would not hear of either of the poor children having more than the due proportion assigned to each.

A lady, happening to call on Mrs. Denningham one morning, found her engaged in reading the manners of the modern Arabs. She extolled the great abstemiousness of their diet, "which no doubt," she said, "produced that degree of uncommon shrewdness, for which they were distinguished."

Charles during this conversation had been overlooking the plates in the book his aunt had just laid aside. Among the number which took his attention was that of an Arabian courser: this from its slight and delicate proportions appeared to him the most singular. Placing

it before his aunt, he said, "I suppose, aunt, the Arabians don't let their horses have as much as they can eat, any more than their children; see, this one looks very thin! I dare say his master weighed his meat, as you do ours. Laura and I shall very soon do to live with these people; we shall soon be as thin as they or their horses; look, aunt, don't you think we shall?" said he, baring his own little arm, and pointing to that of his sister who was playing near him.

This appeal was not lost on Mrs. Denningham. She perceived the children did not thrive under their abstemious regimen, and reluctantly resigned the plan of giving added brilliancy to their mental talents, by depriving them of bodily nourishment: she kissed the

child, told him "she believed it would not do,"—and from that hour he and his sisters were allowed to eat as much as formerly.

CHAPTER II.

At the age of ten years, Charles Denningham was, at the desire of his guardian, sir George Alvington, placed under the care of a clergyman, who resided not far from the country residence of Mrs. Denningham. This latter circumstance was a source of great consolation to her. Beside the high opinion she entertained of Mr. Morland (the gentleman alluded to), she rejoiced that, however necessary it was for her nephew to leave her, she should not be wholly denied the satisfaction of seeing him; and she felt convinced, that with his worthy and considerate preceptor,

Charles would not miss those comforts he had ever been accustomed to when with her. For the first few months of his absence, she was never easy but when she was either going to see him, or receiving accounts of his health: this degree of anxiety was at length lessened by the conviction, that the object of her solicitude was quite resigned to his separation from her and his sisters, by a promise from his guardian that he should be allowed to spend the next vacation with them in London.

Charles Denningham had been an inmate at the vicarage two years when this narrative commenced, and had been again permitted to visit his aunt Mrs. Denningham; who, proud of his rapid improvement under the well directed tuition of Mr. Morland, already began

to look into futurity, with the firm belief that her nephew would one day shine a bright example of superior merit. The theme of his praises never wearied her ear; he and her favourite Laura shared her unbounded affection almost to adoration: for them she laid plans, foretold future greatness, and dwelt so long and so ardently on these hopes, that it was with difficulty she could allow the probability of their failure; they were the source of her present comfort, and future anticipations. Charles might indeed be said to justify these flattering illusions, both by the excellence of his disposition and his superior talents: at twelve years of age he was a boy of the most promising genius. According to the wish of his father, he was to be made perfectly conversant in the oriental languages; as he was, when old

enough, and had completed his education, to embark for India, where a friend of the late Mr. Denningham had promised to forward his interest, and to obtain a high appointment for the youth in the Company's service.

This circumstance had so strongly impressed itself on the mind of Mrs. Denningham, that she had suffered her imagination, as usual, to gain the ascendency over reason; and went on so long fancying the probable high rank her nephew would in a few years obtain, that she at length took it for granted beyond all doubt, and began to build her hopes accordingly. If any one was said to be skilled in languages, "she was sure her Charles would one day surpass them,"—or if an embassy was alluded to, she regretted that he was

not yet old enough to be sent to India, for "she was certain he would in that case be chosen as one in the suite of the ambassador." Maps of Asia were explored and consulted, as to the relative situation of the countries he would be likely to traverse: all India was considered as the scene of his future greatness; while the unconscious boy, the object of these high-flown ideas, was assiduously employed in finishing a beautiful map with scrupulous exactness, in order to please his aunt, to whom he was tenderly attached. While he was thus engaged, the good old lady was not idle (at least in thought). She had lately much wished to outrival a fair member of the learned *coterie* which she sometimes attended: this lady had obtained, by means of her *interest* with a certain noble lord, some very rare and beautiful

Chinese characters, which he had himself brought from the court of Pekin: this valued prize was enough to excite the wonder and envy of an assemblage of learned ladies, whose society Mrs. Denningham had been induced to become a member of, solely from the wish for novelty and the charm of notoriety.

During one of these discourses of our *Bas Bleus*, the poems of Hafiz became the topic of conversation: all agreed in their elegance and beautiful simplicity. The thought suddenly struck our romantic visionary, that a manuscript of these invaluable poems in the original language would be the most desirable acquisition in the world. As she sat at work, contemplating, as usual, the future prospects of her nephew, she determined that he should obtain for her the

desired treasure when he should be in India; for he would doubtless then travel through the adjacent countries of Asia in some capacity or other, perhaps in the suite of some embassy; and "who knows if Charles might not himself arrive at the dignity of being chosen ambassador; why should he not?"—Thus Mrs. Denningham argued; and my readers will now perceive the origin of that singular remark, which occasioned so much surprise to Charles Denningham, as mentioned in the first page of this work. He, who had not traced the rise and progress of his own destiny in the fertile imagination of his aunt, was at a loss to comprehend her meaning: he smiled, incredulous that he had heard rightly; yet so accustomed was he to her abstracted air and singular notions, that, child as he was, he doubted not for a

moment that this too was one of the "whims of my aunt."

With amiable attention to her feelings, he strove to repress the smile that brightened his lively countenance, and the expression of mirth that, spite of himself, beamed in his sparkling eyes; as Mrs. Denningham explained her wish for the Persian manuscript, and the hopes she had of obtaining it by his means.

Laura, less scrupulous, laughed aloud at the idea of her aunt having already determined what Charles should get for her, when he should be a man. She was an intelligent child of her age; but too presuming and free in her manners towards her aunt, who increased this failing by her visible partiality, and ex-

treme indulgence of this her favourite niece; who, having been named after her, and esteemed uncommonly like her in features, was early the little pet of her aunt. This Laura was quick-sighted enough to perceive: she could, she was well aware, by her entreaties make Mrs. Denningham consent to whatever she wished; and, since the absence of her brother, this ascendency had greatly increased.

Julia, now six years of age, though by far a more engaging child, was not so much regarded by her aunt. More diffident and timid in disposition, she had been accustomed to yield in every particular to the caprice of her elder sister: it was not that Mrs. Denningham countenanced this injustice knowingly; but her partiality for Laura blinded her to

the frequent instances of a tyrannical disposition, which her favourite evinced towards her sister Julia; who, gentle and amiable in temper, good-naturedly gave up any wish of her own to oblige Laura or her aunt. Even at her early age she could perceive the difference of Charles's behaviour; and his affectionate tenderness sunk deep in the mind of our heroine (as we shall henceforward consider her): no absence of after years could efface from her memory the impression which his kindness had made; she loved him with the most devoted affection.

Charles was ever her firmest advocate in any little dispute, that occasionally arose between the sisters. He loved them both; but Julia was in his estimation the most amiable: he could not

endure to see her teased by the caprices of Laura without interfering; though it sometimes displeased his aunt, when he was unusually severe in his reproaches on Laura for her unkindness and tyranny to such a sweet-tempered child as Julia. This altercation only served to increase the ill nature of Laura, who never failed to complain of any little neglect, or childish misdemeanor, Julia had unfortunately been guilty of.

Mrs. Denningham, any one would have imagined, had she made any difference in her treatment of the children, would have made the youngest her pet, from the poor little creature's having been so early deprived of a mother, and taken almost from the hour of her birth to be placed under her guardianship; but from a strange perverseness, which

she herself could not account for, Laura was preferred to her sister, though Julia was by her aunt allowed to be not so unmanageable as Laura, and without doubt of a much better temper: this, even in spite of her partiality to her elder niece, Mrs. Denningham was compelled to admit.—"But then Laura was so lively and engaging a girl; she had besides been her first adopted child," from the circumstance of her having stood godmother to Laura previous to the death of her mother. Mrs. Denningham argued too, that no kind of difference could be perceived in her treatment of her nieces; therefore, she could not be said to wrong Julia by her preference for Laura: this the old lady herself believed was true; but no one else could be deceived: it was but too visible who was the favourite.

Naturally cheerful and contented, Julia endured the unkind and sometimes malicious behaviour of Laura without repining; she readily yielded any little gratification, which in the least interfered with the will of those about her: early taught the lesson of submissive obedience, the petulance of childhood was in her entirely checked. The danger that most threatened the temper of Julia was, that being so constantly repressed in the warmest feelings of pure affection, she should become too inanimate, and gradually lose that playful vivacity so engaging in one of her tender years. Conscious of the superior ascendency of Laura, her timid disposition shrunk from any idea of competition with her in the affection of her aunt: all emulation for improvement was thus imprudently checked, and

Julia was made to believe, as she advanced in years, that it would be a vain attempt for her to hope to excel, as she had neither the talents nor beauty of her sister Laura.

This mortifying assertion was too often repeated or insinuated by the visitors of Mrs. Denningham, to suffer Julia to remain ignorant of her aunt's unjust partiality, even had it escaped her own penetration. But this was not the case: she felt and owned the difference made between her and Laura; but, unwilling to attribute the slightest shadow of blame to those whom she so much loved, Julia wished to convince herself, that the real cause of Mrs. Denningham's superior fondness for Laura was on account of the difference of their ages: her sister, being three years older,

was, (Julia argued, and not without reason,) more of a companion to her aunt than she herself could hope to be. Tenderly attached to Mrs. Denningham, she allowed no reflections (in her hearing) to be cast on that kind friend against her weak indulgence of Laura's caprices, which every one remarked to themselves, and sometimes wished to intrude on the attention of Julia. Too generous to own the injustice of her aunt, she ever turned a deaf ear to the artful insinuations of servants and dependents, who sought to make her believe how much they pitied her situation, and lamented the blind partiality of her aunt. Dependents are ever quick in perceiving who is the favourite in the family; and they generally pay their court accordingly, frequently neglecting in the most shameful manner those

whom they think not so much esteemed. This was sometimes the case with poor Julia, notwithstanding the mild placidity of her manners, and the good-humoured affability with which she conducted herself. Others, pitying her orphan state, and really lamenting the difference made between the sisters, erred in the contrary way, by imprudently mentioning their observations to Julia herself, and thus unwittingly perhaps laying the foundation of jealousy and discontent, as would have been the case with many; but our little heroine, from her earliest years, evinced a disposition too amiable to be warped by such ill-judged remarks.

Mrs. Denningham had, during the many years the children had resided with her, spared no expense, no trouble,

in their improvement. The best masters had been engaged to render them accomplished and elegant in manners; nor was she disappointed in her hope of their equalling, if not excelling, their youthful competitors in modern acquirements of fashionable education. But so various had been the plans proposed and adopted by their aunt for this purpose, and so frequently had they been changed to give place to others recommended by her friends in London; that both Laura and Julia stood in some danger of being left in perfect ignorance of those essential branches of study, which form the mind, and lay the foundation for more solid improvement. Fortunately for them, they were rescued from the very imminent risk of becoming mere fashionable triflers, by the timely advice, and friendly interference, of a lady residing

in the immediate vicinity of Westcombe Priory, the country residence of Mrs. Denningham.

Mrs. Mordaunt had, by her amiable manners, greatly interested Mrs. Denningham in her favour; and in a short time gained such an influence with her, that she became the friend and confidant of our romantic visionary, to whom she frequently rendered the most essential service by her judicious advice, which, given in the mildest and most persuasive manner, the natural good sense of Mrs. Denningham could not always resist, and was never displeased at.

Mrs. Mordaunt was the widow of an officer of that name, who had greatly distinguished himself in his military

career, and at length fell in the service of his country, deeply lamented by his brother officers and a numerous circle of acquaintance. At his death, Mrs. Mordaunt finding her income very inconsiderable, she deemed it most prudent to retire from the scenes of high life, and with her young family to seek the shades of retirement.

Mrs. Denningham gladly availed herself of the advantage of having such a neighbour; and, by her polite and unremitting attentions to Mrs. Mordaunt, proved her own good sense and discrimination of character, unbiassed by the petty distinctions of wealth, and totally disregarding the opinion of many of her other acquaintance, who chanced to be more favoured by the gifts of fortune. Many of this epheme-

ral race, who valued themselves solely on their riches, wondered how Mrs. Denningham could be so absurd as to take any pleasure in the society of "such a quiet humdrum sort of being as Mrs. Mordaunt; who could not now afford to be one of the fashionable world, having little else but her pension as an officer's widow to maintain herself and children."

But all her fashionable acquaintance, it must be allowed, were not equally unfeeling; and in the day of adversity Mrs. Mordaunt had the consolation of more than one dear and valued friend, who had, unchanged by her present state of comparative poverty, remained firm to her interest, and greatly exerted themselves in her favour. Her son, the eldest of her children, was by their in-

terest placed, at the proper age, in the military school at ——— ; and a promise was given that his advancement should be ensured as far as possible. This was a great relief to the anxiety of Mrs. Mordaunt; who, with unfeigned gratitude acknowledged the blessings which Providence had so mercifully bestowed on her and her destitute children, by thus granting them such friends as had both the will and the power to serve them in their utmost need, deprived as they now were of the protection of a father.

Jane, the second child of our amiable recluse, became the almost inseparable companion of Laura and Julia (during their residence in the country), but of the latter more especially. Their dispositions were more suitable, and Jane,

early in their acquaintance, preferred the mild and affectionate manners of Julia to the hauteur and assuming behaviour of Laura; who too often seemed to value herself upon her own pretensions to beauty and superficial accomplishments; every where expecting that submission and deference to her will, which her aunt had so blindly indulged her in. Yet when she condescended to be agreeable, and to endeavour to please, none had the art of winning admiration more decidedly than Laura Denningham. With all the advantages of polished manners and an uncommonly elegant person, she possessed the art of charming her companions by the sportive sallies of her wit, and a playfulness peculiarly her own: to those who had not long been acquainted with her, she appeared the

most amiable and fascinating creature imaginable. She knew how to control her temper, to conceal her foibles, when she sought to please: fond of admiration, and naturally vain, she spared no pains to attract the attention of her aunt's visitors; and yet in so artful a manner, as to appear perfectly unconscious of her power to please. Jane Mordaunt she wished to impress with the idea of her superior pretensions, and was greatly mortified that she could not succeed in exciting the envy of that amiable girl. Laura perceived too, that her sister Julia, whom she considered as nobody, was more esteemed than herself both by Mrs. Mordaunt and her daughter; who were both too impartial in their opinions, not to observe the different dispositions of the sisters. They lamented the folly of Mrs. Denningham,

who, unconscious of the real mischief she was doing to the interests of her darling niece, suffered herself to be guided by every whim and caprice of Laura, to the injury of her disposition and future happiness.

The society of Mrs. Mordaunt and her daughter were of the greatest advantage to Julia. With them she gradually acquired that degree of courage and self-possession, which had been so much repressed by the tyranny and unkindness of Laura: she began to feel, that, by application, she too might acquire those accomplishments, for which her sister had been so much praised by her aunt; that, in fact, she was not herself deficient in capacity to learn, as she had been led to imagine, and which had early checked her hope to excel.

The discriminating praises of Mrs. Mordaunt encouraged the timid spirit of our young heroine: she soon improved rapidly under the friendly guidance of her amiable preceptress, for as such Julia ever gratefully acknowledged Mrs. Mordaunt.

In their morning avocations at the cottage, Julia and Miss Mordaunt equally shared her attention: she directed their employments, and selected such books for their perusal, as she thought would add most to their information and amusement.

Both the young people, happy in her society, owned that these were the happiest hours of their lives; and with the deepest regret it was that Julia found herself obliged to give up this

pleasure, to return to London each succeeding winter. Perceiving this, and willing to gratify her niece, Mrs. Denningham begged Mrs. Mordaunt would allow her daughter to accompany the young people for a few months: but this request her friend would not admit of; not from any selfish dislike to part with Jane for a short time, but from a fear that the gaiety and splendour of a town life would give her beloved child a taste for those pleasures beyond her own situation in life, and probably make her feel more sensibly the deprivations she must submit to on her return.

The prudence of this argument Mrs. Denningham could not doubt; and as Laura did not make it a point to have Jane Mordaunt with them, the proposal

was not again urged.—Julia could not conceal her disappointment, and almost with tears entreated Mrs. Mordaunt to change her resolution: Jane's eloquent eyes spoke the same wish, but all to no purpose; and at length, perceiving her mother was firm on this subject, she would not pain her by appearing disappointed: yet the disappointment was certainly very great at her age, and this Mrs. Mordaunt was sensible of; but the future welfare of her child demanded this sacrifice; in kindness to her she therefore persisted in refusing to give her consent to the visit to London.

CHAPTER III.

At this time Laura was eighteen, and impatiently expected the proposed return to London, as next winter she was to be introduced (in other words, she was to come out that season). To this happy period she had long looked forward with eager impatience, not doubting that she should soon attract a crowd of admirers; nor was her aunt less sanguine in her expectations. She hoped her niece would then be the admiration of all their acquaintance in town; and though she dreaded to part with her favourite, yet she secretly hoped that Laura might form some splendid alliance, and thus fulfil her most flattering hopes.

Of Julia (being yet but a child in her opinion), Mrs. Denningham had not considered. For her she had laid no plans; as yet Charles and Laura had alone engrossed her attention. The former being now at the university, was very seldom with his aunt and sisters, but intended this winter to join their party in London. This long looked for interview Julia, in particular, anticipated with delight; nothing but this could compensate for her disappointment in not being allowed to take her friend Jane Mordaunt with her to town.

Charles Denningham, now nearly twenty, had left his former tutor Mr. Morland for two years, during which time he had been a perfect stranger at the Priory. Neither Mrs. Denningham nor his sisters had seen him, from his

having spent the vacations at the residence of his guardian, sir George Alvington, who, knowing Charles had the prospect of a good fortune after the death of his aunt, wished to engage him to one of his own daughters, who would inherit but very slender portions. The match he considered would be advantageous, and the worldly-minded father had long resolved, that either Miss Honoria, or her accomplished sister Georgina, should become the wife of his ward.

This determination was not known to Mrs. Denningham, or she would not have wished her nephew to accept the invitations of his guardian. Ignorant of his motives, she attributed the seeming interest sir George felt for Charles to his former friendship for her brother the late Mr. Denningham, of whom she

had frequently heard him speak with the highest encomiums on his many virtues and amiable qualifications.

On their arrival in town, Laura was received by the Miss Alvingtons with more than usual complaisance: at the instigation of their father, they had adopted this sure method of winning her over to their views respecting Charles; and hoped, by flattering her, they should secure the good will of Mrs. Denningham.

It may not be here amiss to introduce my readers to the family of the Alvingtons, whom, it will be found, we shall have occasion to mention frequently in this little narrative.

Sir George Alvington had once been

the owner of a very considerable property; but, from his own extravagance and that of his lady, it was latterly so much impaired, that, to keep up the appearance he deemed necessary for a man of his rank, he was under the necessity of living up to the very extent of his income; the greatest part of which, from his having no son, would, at his death, devolve with the title to a distant relation, with whom sir George was not on the most amicable terms.

Sir George Alvington was elegant in person, and pleasing in his manners. Though now past the meridian of life, he had the art of rendering himself an agreeable acquisition to whatever company he was introduced. This pleasing suavity of address, and the seemingly generous sincerity of his heart, first

gained him the esteem of the late Mr. Denningham; and it was not known, till long after the death of that gentleman, that the circumstances of sir George were so deeply involved, or the father of Charles would never have selected him for the guardian of his son.

Lady Alvington was, like many of a certain class of fashionables, a finished manœuvrer. She had herself gained an establishment of her own by little arts, practised solely to attract the attentions of sir George, who, then a rich young baronet, was a prize worth trying for. She had succeeded to the utmost of her wishes; and had, as lady Alvington, contributed not a little toward lessening his fortune. She married him merly from the wish to outvie her com-

panions in dress and expense of every kind; it could not therefore be expected she would study his interest, in preference to gratifying her own passion for ostentatious display.

Honoria and Georgina Alvington were highly accomplished, and rather what might be termed showy-looking girls, than strictly handsome. Complete dashers in manners and dress, they were ever in the extreme of the mode. Theirs was not the down-cast eye of modest beauty, shrinking from the ardent gaze of admiration: they too evidently sought to attract attention; and were, besides, too conscious of their own superficial acquirements: yet, to suit their own purposes, they could assume the appearance of a simplicity not natural to them, and affect the most

scrupulous propriety of conduct. Tutored by their mother (an adept in all these petty artifices), the Miss Alvingtons hoped, by their or her address, to ensure themselves an alliance in some family of fortune or high rank: now in the very bloom of youth and beauty, they doubted not of making conquests worthy of their hopes.

Such was the family to which Charles Denningham had been introduced at the early age of nineteen. Ignorant of the world, at least of that part of it which resembled the Alvingtons, he could not be aware of the art and duplicity of those he was to associate with. Under the care of Mr. Morland, he had lived in comparative seclusion; but, in the company of such an amiable friend and able preceptor, retirement had not

been irksome: his hours had been spent in literary research, or recreations that would unbend the mind from study, and yet not lessen his eager desire for mental improvement.

Mr. Morland had, during his stay at the vicarage, won the esteem and confidence of his pupil. The influence gained in the boyish days of Charles Denningham was not afterwards lessened by absence: at the university, he continued to correspond with his former tutor, as his friend and adviser; in any difficulty, the worthy Morland was consulted, with implicit reliance on the justice of his opinion. That amiable man had known but little of the world for many years: he had not lately mixed in what is termed the circles of high life; but in his retirement he had heard enough of

the Alvingtons, to convince him that their acquaintance was by no means a desirable acquisition to his young friend; yet, he had so firm a reliance on the probity and natural candour of Charles Denningham, that he hoped the best. His pupil, he thought, would not easily be misled into the habits of folly and extravagance which he had been taught to shun with the utmost vigilance.

Nor was Charles alone the only member of the Denningham family for whom Mr. Morland entertained more than common regard; the interesting Julia shared the good man's unbounded esteem. He had perceived with regret, (during his frequent visits at the Priory,) the unjust partiality of Mrs. Denningham. He could not avoid observing, that Laura was daily being injured by

her aunt's misguided conduct, while the real merits of Julia were altogether disregarded. Pleased with the mild, forgiving disposition of our heroine, he had endeavoured to place her on an equality with her sister in the estimation of Mrs. Denningham, by convincing her that she would, with proper encouragement, be equally clever with Laura, but that being continually repressed in her endeavours to excel, she had become too diffident of her own abilities.

Mrs. Denningham, notwithstanding these well-meant and just remonstrances, could not be persuaded that she was herself unjust in her extreme fondness for her elder niece. Julia, she would say, as she did to Mrs. Mordaunt, had nothing to complain of, for no

material difference was made between her and Laura; and there the matter rested.

Mrs. Denningham felt convinced, that Julia was an unusual favourite with Mr. Morland, and with their neighbours at the Cottage. This she was not surprised at; for, excepting the idol of her heart, Laura, "she was the most amiable being in the world: she was sure she too loved Julia too much to neglect her; but the dear child must learn to submit to her elder sister in some things—it was but right she should do so, though, at the same time, to be treated with affection." After these reflections, the good old lady would, perhaps, check Laura for a day or two, in any little act of injustice towards her sister; but, as nothing could make a

lasting impression on her own versatile mind, even at her advanced age, the new resolution of reform did not last for a longer period; and poor Julia again fell into insignificance.

Laura, on her introduction into fashionable life, attracted all the admiration which even the most sanguine expectations of her aunt could hope. At the play, at the ball, or in the polite throngs of private parties, the beautiful Laura Denningham was extolled for her superior charms of beauty and elegance; nor was the very considerable fortune she was likely to have from her aunt's liberality one of the least attractive of her charms. With respect to her pretensions to beauty, many differed; but all agreed in the estimation of her fortune, that it was an indisputable advan-

tage. The ladies were, indeed, heard to say, that "her features were not regular, and that hers was not a style of beauty that would last; and, as to her fortune, that, being derived from the West Indies, was by no means to be depended on." This latter remark some of the most selfish and calculating of her admirers were not backward in agreeing to; but the generality of the young men of fashion swore she was divine, "a most lovely creature!" Some of the bucks extolled her air and manners; others admired her brilliant eyes and the enchanting dimples that played round her beautiful mouth: many admired her playful wit and high spirit, which gave a dignity to her whole deportment; but nearly as many dissented from this latter opinion, and were heard to say, "that it was but too probable,

if once seriously displeased or thwarted, that very spirit, now so much admired, might transform the beautiful smiling Laura into a perfect virago: impatient as she was of control, hers was not a temper they should choose for a wife."

Among the most ardent of her admirers were, the Honourable Mr. Leslie, sir Carroll O'Neal, an Irish baronet, and captain Kinmore. These three competitors for her favour were her most constant attendants in public, each, from very different motives, anxious to secure the prize, for which so many would envy them.

Mr. Leslie, the most worthy, and not the least favoured by Laura, was, from being a younger brother, not in very affluent circumstances, consider-

ing his rank in life. His greatest expectations with regard to fortune were from the promises of a rich uncle, who had declared it his intention, to leave the greatest part of his immense wealth to Mr. Leslie. This, being but a precarious dependence, the latter very honourably stated to Mrs. Denningham, when he made known to her his attachment to her niece.

Laura had, on their first acquaintance, certainly encouraged the addresses of Mr. Leslie, not from having duly estimated his many amiable qualities, but from the circumstance of his being likely to inherit the title of his elder brother, the latter having no son. The prospect of becoming lady Ormond, was too flattering to the vanity of Laura Denningham, to be rejected in haste.

She was, for this, willing to overlook any deficiency with regard to fortune, for the present, at least; for her aunt, she knew, would bestow sufficient on her to provide for them both, suitably to their rank, till after the death of the old uncle, whose riches would then devolve to his nephew.

Mrs. Denningham had long admired the character of Mr. Leslie, and of all the suitors for the fair hand of her niece she gave him the most decided preference; nor was *she* altogether insensible to the advantages of rank offered in this union of Laura with the next heir to the title of Ormond. The good old lady again fell into her former reveries; in all of which, the aggrandizement of her favourite Laura and her intended husband was the leading object: she

flattered herself, that no obstacle could prevent the expected marriage. But Mrs. Denningham was, as on many former occasions, doomed to be disappointed in this scheme. She had not taken into consideration the versatile, capricious disposition of her niece, who suddenly, from some slight pique, became cool and distant to Mr. Leslie; and just when her aunt had hoped she would come to some final arrangement relative to her marriage, Laura astonished her by declaring, that she never would become Mrs. Leslie, but, on the contrary, she had half made up her mind to accept sir Carroll O'Neal.

"Sir Carroll O'Neal!" exclaimed Mrs. Denningham. "Laura, is it possible you can be so unthinking, so unprincipled? You have encouraged Leslie, and yet

you tell me you prefer his rival. Child, you have used that amiable young man most shamefully by this capricious trifling, of which I thought you incapable!"

Laura made no reply; and her aunt still hoping to win her over to her former engagement with Leslie, she continued, "Dear Laura, is it possible you can be so blind to your own interest, as to prefer an Irish baronet to the presumptive heir to an earldom?"

"Dear aunt, I have told you what I mean to do: I shall certainly accept sir Carroll; he is such a dear, charming creature—all life and gaiety, quite outdashes Mr. Leslie, who is too good and too steady for me. So, aunt, you see you must now give up all hopes of my

being lady Ormond; it canna, winna, mumna be," said she laughingly, quoting the words of an old Scotch song, and humming them over carelessly to the tune of the ballad. She evidently enjoyed the dismay and utter amazement depicted on the countenance of Mrs. Denningham.

"I am really shocked, Laura," said the latter, "at the levity with which you treat this important subject. Besides, I had planned every thing so well for you and Leslie:—the Priory was to have been fitted up for you both for my life, and Julia and I would have been content with the cottage in the park. I had laid out all the intended improvements; and then to have seen you some future time lady Ormond, (if you had been happy, my child,) would have been all I could

have wished," said the poor old lady, grieved to find she had planned so much in vain.

"Dear aunt," said Laura, "instead of preparing the Priory, I think you have, as usual, been building castles in the air. But suppose I should be lady O'Neal, instead of lady Ormond; will not that *sound* quite as well? To be sure, sir Carroll is only a baronet, an Irish baronet, with fifteen hundred a year, and a park. But you look as grave as if I were going to wed sir Gawen, or some other grim knight of the woful countenance."

At this moment the Miss Alvingtons were announced; and the lively chit-chat of these and other morning visitors dispelled the gloom, which had begun to

settle on the brow of Mrs. Denningham. She felt hurt at the want of confidence which Laura had evinced towards her; for, upon further inquiry, her aunt found she had actually rejected Mr. Leslie, and as decidedly accepted sir Carroll, without once consulting her on the subject. She too well knew the temper of her niece, to hope that any thing she could now urge, to entreat her to be more considerate, would be of any avail. Self-willed and hasty as even *she* was compelled to allow Laura to be, Mrs. Denningham knew, that, if she attempted to oppose her inclinations, it would only render her niece more peremptory in her determination. She sighed, as she called to mind the mild obedience of Julia: "she would not turn a deaf ear to my advice," said she, mentally.

Sir Carroll O'Neal, the cause of her present disquiet, was an Irish baronet, once of good fortune; but latterly, from a continual run of ill luck at the gaming-table, his income was considerably lessened. Thoughtless, good-natured in the extreme, he was an easy dupe to those who were less scrupulous than himself in notions of honour. He was, by many of his acquaintance, accused of having an eye to Miss Denningham's fortune, rather than a real attachment to herself; but this accusation was as unfounded as ungenerous, for he really preferred Laura to every other female of his acquaintance. Her vivacity and high spirit had delighted him; and in his devotion to his fair mistress, he never once staid to consider what fortune she would have: had Laura been pennyless, he would have declared himself her en-

thusiastic admirer, and most devoted lover.

Unlike his intimate friend and companion, captain Kinmore, sir Carroll was only too generous and unsuspicious: fervent in his attachments, he was a firm friend and ardent lover. And yet, with such a noble disposition, no prudent mother or guardian could wish their daughter or ward to become his wife: inevitable ruin, and all the horrors of poverty, were the almost certain consequences of a union with this thoughtless though amiable young man.

It was this belief that so strongly biassed the judgment of Mrs. Denningham against the match, even more than the demolition of all her favourite projects, when she so deeply regretted the impru-

dent choice, which her niece had determined on. In vain she attempted, with the assistance of Charles Denningham, to dissuade Laura from becoming lady O'Neal, even if she intended to think no more of Leslie. But she was deaf to their remonstrances; and Mrs. Denningham was, at length, reluctantly drawn in to give her consent to what she could not be brought to approve. The ensuing morning, sir Carroll was received as the accepted lover of her niece; and soon after the day was named, when Laura's fate was to be decided past all retrall, and she was to become the bride of the happy sir Carroll.

Julia, being three years younger than her sister, was considered too much of a child to take any interest in what was about to take place; at the early age of

fifteen, it was not likely she should have much care for the future. Believing, as she did, that Laura could not fail in being happy, now she had gained her aunt's consent to have the man of her choice, Julia rejoiced with sincere delight at the flattering prospects of her sister: tenderly attached to Laura, she lamented only the certainty of their separation, which must take place so soon.

Unkind as Laura had been, yet the forgiving and affectionate Julia could not but regret losing her sister, perhaps for a great length of time; and the idea of her residing constantly in Ireland seemed at first too melancholy to be thought of. Her greatest consolation amid these sombre reflections was the hope of retaining Jane Mordaunt in the

neighbourhood of the Priory. She had been her first, her earliest friend: two years older than our heroine, Miss Mordaunt had been her confidante and adviser, from the time of their first acquaintance: with her and Mrs. Mordaunt's instructions, she had followed that line of duty, which had so importantly tended to her improvement and happiness.

Contrasted with the manners of the Miss Alvingtons, the sweetness and simplicity of Jane Mordaunt rose still higher in the estimation of Julia; nor was she the only person, who drew a comparison between these trifling insipid beings and the unaffected unobtrusive daughter of Mrs. Mordaunt.

Charles Denningham too plainly saw

through the shallow devices of sir George Alvington and his two daughters, to be for a moment flattered by the very particular attentions he received from either. The father he knew to be a perfect man of the world; and the daughters were too vain and trifling to please even so young a man as Charles Denningham, if he had the least discrimination of character. Charles was not deficient in discernment: he saw that Honoria, the eldest of the Miss Alvingtons, was a mere sentimental fine lady, who had so filled her head with German plays and French romances, that she could scarcely condescend to give a thought to any thing but love and sentimental friendship of the most extravagant kind; not unfrequently to the great amusement of her numerous acquaintance.

Georgina, the second daughter, laid claim to being a wit, and fancied that the pert flippancy of her replies were received with universal applause; while, in fact, she was the jest of all who knew her. The very reverse of the languor and affectation of her sentimental sister, she tormented every one with her excessive volubility and overstrained vivacity: it was difficult to say which she excited most, the mirth or the contempt of her companions.

Lady Alvington throught them truly irresistible, and was perfectly astonished that Charles Denningham was not quite smitten with one or other of her accomplished daughters. She excused him, at first, on account of his extreme youth; but this could now no longer be urged as a reason for his indifference: and lady

Alvington was secretly much mortified that her plan had not succeeded; this her pride would not allow her to acknowledge openly.

"He is but a school-boy yet," said she to sir George, at one of their private conferences on the subject; "he is but lately escaped from the jurisdiction of that moping old book-worm Morland," added her ladyship with contemptuous petulance.

"Very true," replied sir George; "but I could have wished him, young as he is, to have made choice of one of the girls, or we may lose him yet: the boy may see some country Miss at the Priory, who will succeed in gaining him, though Honoria and Georgina have failed."

"Impossible!" exclaimed his lady with great vehemence: "you pay the Miss Alvingtons a high compliment indeed, to imagine for a moment that an ignorant country girl can ever rival my daughters, distinguished as they are for their beauty and accomplishments."

"Well, my love, I did not mean to slight the dear girls," replied sir George. "If the young fellow saw with my eyes, he would prefer them to any other beings on the face of the globe; but another winter may be more successful; perhaps, too, the girls may be invited by that old quiz, Mrs. Denningham, to return to the Priory with her nieces; if so, I shall still hope the best," added he; and thus ended the consultation.

CHAPTER IV.

The Miss Alvingtons, instructed by their very prudent mamma, so completely ingratiated themselves into the favour of Laura, that she insisted upon their returning with her to Westcombe. This was precisely what they both wished; but, in order to enhance the favour of their company to their young friend, they just then unfortunately called to mind several engagements they had already made among their acquaintance. Laura, as they expected, became the more resolute in her determination, that they should give her the preference, and go immediately to the Priory. After

much seeming debate, the young ladies at length consented. Honoria declared it was impossible to refuse her fair friend any thing.

"Dear, lovely Laura," said she, with an affected sigh; "I cannot renounce the pleasure of your valued society; I cannot *exist* without *you*, sweet fascinating girl! What would the whole world be without a friend? where could I then look for a congenial soul? Friendship, such as ours, is the bliss of life!" added the romantic girl, with all the silly airs of sentimental heroism.

"What will you do when I am in Ireland?" inquired Laura, with her usual archness.

"Oh! the kind zephyrs will waft her

sighs over to the emerald isle," said Georgina.

"But dear Honour, bright and fair, here's the Captain debonair; will not he console you, think you, in the absence of Miss Denningham?"

This was said in such a half ironical half playful manner, that Laura could not avoid joining in the laugh at the expense of Honoria; and declaring that captain Kinmore might, she thought, well supply the place of the *congenial soul* Miss Alvington had been so long seeking. This retort rather nettled the young lady; for she was conscious she had flirted very much of late with the dashing Hibernian; but not with any decided preference for him, but merely because he knew how to compliment

her in her own style. This, it is certain, he did but for his own amusement, and that of his brother officers; who jestingly observed, "that Kinmore had proved how easy it was to obtain the distinctions of *Honour*, however perverse that purblind dame Fortune had hitherto been to his wishes."

At the moment captain Kinmore and Charles Denningham appeared, the two sisters had unfortunately thrown aside their company voices; and were sharply engaged in a dispute, which had so completely thrown them off their guard, that neither was conscious of the approach of the gentlemen. Laura, all the time, was laughing heartily at the pet they were in about such a trifle, as had been the original cause of their altercation.

On entering the drawing-room, the first glance convinced the intruders, that their presence was at that instant quite *mal-à-propos*; yet they had advanced too far to retreat. Unwilling as they were to be spectators of this little fracas, they were in a manner forced into it: both sisters began in one breath vehemently accusing each other of "envy, malice, and all uncharitableness." It was with the utmost difficulty, that the united efforts of both gentlemen could pacify the anger of the enraged disputants; each declared the other was to blame, and neither was willing to conciliate. The languishing eyes of Honoria now sparkled with rage, her whole frame trembled with passion; while her sister, with provoking malice, cast the most ironical and cutting reflections on the conduct of the sentimental Honoria,

whose present manner she purposely contrasted with her usual affectation of mild benevolence and sweet timidity.

Laura, in spite of her mirth at their expense, felt almost ashamed of their violence and want of decorum.

Charles, who had never before witnessed such a scene, stood utterly confounded; but Kinmore, with more address and presence of mind, by indirect compliments to both ladies succeeded in soothing their irritable tempers, and began again to converse with Honoria in his accustomed style of bombast; which, from the very amiable motive of mortifying her sister, she now encouraged more than ever. She gradually resumed her airs of languid sensibility; and was once more, as if by magic, the

very soul of sentiment. Reclining gracefully on one of the superb couches, she took up a volume of Zimmerman on Solitude. "Charming idea, how lovely is solitude!" she exclaimed in a soft melodious accent.

"Not very polite to the present company," said her sister, in something of her late acrimonious tone of voice.

"But does not the same author remark, that even in the most delightful solitude he still felt a wish for some dear object, to *whom* he could say, 'How lovely is solitude?'" said Charles Denningham.

"You are right, Charles," observed Laura; "he no doubt wished for a *congenial soul*," said she, casting a playful

mischievous glance at Honoria, which was not lost on Kinmore. He guessed it was an allusion to a former remark of Honoria or her sister, more likely the former. "Perhaps some one dearer than a friend, a lover!" said Kinmore, throwing himself on his knees, and snatching the fair hand of Miss Alvington with impassioned ardour, which he pressed to his lips; "with a lover perhaps you would condescend to exclaim, 'How charming is solitude!' Lovely Honoria, with thee the most frightful solitude would be to me a Paradise!"

All joined in the laugh against the blushing simpering heroine, who, for a time, pretended to be quite embarrassed by the high-flown speech of the gallant captain; but at length perceiving she was the object of ridicule to all present,

instead of envy and admiration, as she had before flattered herself, she started from the couch, and exclaimed with a tragedy air, "There is no true love, but love divine!"

This was too ridiculous: even Charles Demningham, (though provoked and disgusted at her folly,) could not repress his laughter; and Miss Alvington, casting one of her most indignant glances at the whole party, left them to enjoy their mirth uncontrolled.

Georgina maliciously enjoyed the evident mortification of her sister; and pleased herself with the idea, that she should now wholly engross the attention of both gentlemen to her own bon-mots and fancied witticisms. For Laura, being already engaged, could not be displeased

at her attracting the admiration of captain Kinmore, if Charles Denningham should continue indifferent.

Both gentlemen were to accompany their party to Westcombe-Priory; and Miss Georgina thought it advisable, like many other young ladies, "to keep two strings to her bow," as she expressed herself. But we will now, if the reader please, return to the worthy Mrs. Denningham and her nieces, whom we left on the point of quitting town to return to the Priory. Previous to their departure, it was necessary to call on their several friends to take leave of them. During these visits, Julia found ample field for amusement; and sometimes, though but rarely, of improvement. Laura, (engaged as she was with younger, and, as she thought, more

agreeable companions than most of her aunt's friends,) would not always be of the party, but prevailed on her and Julia to make her excuses.

It may be remembered, at the time when Mrs. Denningham was first introduced to the reader, she had formed an acquaintance with a certain learned *coterie*, a kind of *Bas Bleu* society. Now, though Mrs. Denningham had certainly given up all literary competition of late years, yet she had not renounced the acquaintance of her learned friends; she still occasionally was of their parties, and not unfrequently adopted some of her favourite schemes from new opinions they had started in her hearing.

Among this circle of friends, Mrs. Oldbury was a standing favourite; every

thing that she did or said was sure to be approved by our visionary.

Lady Blandish, with the noted Chinese characters, had long since retired from this vain world, and its still vainer pursuits, "to that bourn from whence no traveller returns," and to that world, where the virtues of a Christian character alone could be of any service to her ladyship.

Many others of Mrs. Denningham's early friends had in a similar manner disappeared "from life's busy stage." But one aged spinster yet remained, who had been the first member of the learned society before alluded to: she seemed, by her vehemence of utterance and extreme volubility, to have kept even old Time himself at bay; as *she*

had for nearly half a century every male human being of her acquaintance. From her ladyship's dashing nephew, to the very footman who was perforce obliged to wait on her, all dreaded alike the sound of her not very mellifluous voice. Having lately, to the relief of her friends, been wholly engrossed by the study of craniology, she very charitably laid down the rule, that people were either good or bad according to the appearance of their sculls. She had studied, and studied so long, that she at length gave implicit credence to the fanciful system broached by the learned Spurzheim, and others of his peculiar way of reasoning. It must be owned, that in feeling over the protuberances of her own scull, lady Ann had flattered herself, that hers alone was of the most amiable and desirable construction. Proud of this

fancied superiority, she was never so well pleased as when discussing the subject of craniology; and was sure to end by wishing to feel the sculls of all her different visitors, whom she could possibly persuade to suffer their heads to be submitted to her judgment.

Another lady of the same *coterie* was distinguished for her studies in various branches of natural history; and besides had such a passion for the dawning arts of the savage nations, that she actually sent to America to purchase a piece of cloth made of the bark of some tree, the peculiar growth of that country. With this she received a fine specimen of matting, woven with great ingenuity from the long grass by the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands. This Mrs. Paterson declared to be inimitable,

both for use and beauty. She said, "she greatly preferred it to carpets, and was resolved to have the whole of her country-house furnished with this new and ingenious manufacture, in place of the costly carpets, which had, till now, decorated her apartments at the villa of Beaulieu. Mrs. Paterson staid not to consider how this singular substitute would correspond with the magnificence and splendour which the other furniture exhibited: it was a novel idea; no one but herself had planned it; and that one reason was, in itself, all-sufficient. The next consideration was, where should she get it manufactured, even if a similar kind of grass could be obtained: in this dilemma, Mrs. Paterson determined to consult "her dear friend Mrs. Denningham," before she left town. Accordingly, when that lady did call, she

was entertained with a long detail of the superior advantages of matting over carpets, which Mrs. Paterson declared to be enervating in the extreme.

"But would not India matting be equal to that from the South Sea Islands?" inquired Mrs. Denningham. "The former is to be had, and is sometimes used in this country; I think you will find great difficulty in procuring the latter, at least sufficient for your purpose."

"I detest the India matting, and I am certain it has not half the advantages of my beautiful specimen," replied the lady: "I wish to have a manufactory established in this country, for this particular kind. I wish Mr. Paterson would allow me to set up one in our village,

near Beaulieu: it would be an excellent method of employing the poor; besides, they could weave hammocks for their children, the same as you, no doubt, have seen in the British Museum; much better for them than sleeping on those heaps of filth and rags they call beds."

Here Mrs. Paterson was obliged to stop to take breath; and Mrs. Denningham said, (as if struck with some sudden thought,) "And you really think it would be to their advantage if we could succeed in establishing your plan; I should like to try, if I could be certain of benefitting the poor by it."

"My dearest friend, you quite delight me; you are positively the only enterprising character I know. I make no

manner of doubt of its succeeding; you must set about it immediately: I will consult Dr. W—— what kind of grass should be cultivated for our purpose: I know he can advise us, and will be happy to forward any new plan; it is what he delights in. You shall have my beautiful specimen of matting, and the curious hammock; they will both serve your people as patterns."

"I am determined to try what can be done," rejoined Mrs. Denningham; "since it may serve, at all events, to employ the poor children, and so far will do good. I shall set about it immediately on my return; as soon, at least, as we have found what grass will do the best. And I must engage one or two experienced weavers to examine the web you intend to lend me; these, and

spinners, must be had to instruct the children. But may I not beg the favour of seeing these valuable curiosities? I mean the hammock and matting, which I have not yet seen."

"Oh! by all means; what could I possibly be thinking of, not to show you them before? Shall I trouble you to go with me to the nursery, you will then see the hammock in perfection. I had Mr. B—— of the L—— Museum here this morning, to consult with him how it should be slung, that I might have it precisely like those used by the South Sea Islanders." Saying this, she instantly led the way to the children's apartments; she threw open the door of the sleeping room, and, to the utter amazement of Mrs. Denningham, (and Julia, who had been an attentive ob-

server of all that had passed,) they beheld two infants asleep in the hammock before mentioned. This was slung at least eight or ten feet from the floor, and across the middle of the room, suspended from the ceiling: the apartment being exceeding lofty and spacious, it really appeared frightful to behold two such young children so imprudently exposed to the danger that threatened them, of being, by any inadvertency in drawing up the cord of the hammock, thrown out from such a height; the probable consequences of which were too dreadful to think of.

"There!" said Mrs. Paterson exultingly, "is not that singular? is not that simplicity itself? primitive simplicity, no fine complicated machinery, no encumbrance of bedstead. This hammock

folds up, or is suspended as you now see it: that is precisely the method of the natives of Owhyhee, or Otaheite!"

"But I should fear some accident to the children: are they quite safe, do you think, drawn up to such a tremendous height as they now are? I must own," said Mrs. Denningham, "that Julia and I are alarmed for their safety, dear little creatures! I should fear that slight cord of dried grass alone was not sufficiently strong to bear them."

"You are deceived altogether, I assure you," replied the mother of the poor babes: "that hammock would support the weight of a man six feet in height; but I cannot persuade nurse of this," said she, smiling at what she called the vain fears of her attendant.

"No, madam, I can't say I like such new-fangled ways; why should we follow the ways of a parcel of wild *selviges*, who never knew the comfort of a bed in all their lives? The dear children will surely be killed; if, madam, you do mean to keep using this outlandish vagary: for my part, I can hardly sit by and see the dear innocents hoisted up like in a great cabbage net, all hanging as it were on nothing."

Here the old woman, (who had been an attendant in the family for many years, and was moreover rather a favourite with her lady,) began to entreat she would let the infants once more "sleep in a bed fit for a Christian;" meaning a human being, in which sense the word Christian is fre-

quently used incorrectly by the lower classes.

"No, Dalling, no, I cannot give up my plans; Christian or Pagan, the children shall sleep there. I am sure they are very comfortable; but before we go, let us just have a peep at the dear little animals."

Dalling, grumbling and discontented, began to loosen the very slender cord that fastened the hammock. This had by some means become entangled in being drawn up; and the moment she attempted to unfasten it and lower the hammock, from its twisted state it began twirling round and round, in a way very similar to that of a machine called a bottle-jack, which, when wound up,

continues going round for a certain interval. By this extraordinary action of the rope it broke; but fortunately not before the children had nearly reached the ground in their strange sort of couch. Julia, almost dead with terror, rushed forward, and, by the assistance of Dalling, caught the hammock just before it touched the boards. The infants, awakened by the velocity and singular mode of their descent, looked wildly around; terrified as they were, they had no sooner recovered their breath, than they immediately set up such a scream, as to make the lofty chamber re-echo with their piercing cries: it was with the utmost difficulty, that the nurse and the tender-hearted Julia could possibly succeed in quieting them.

Alarmed at the accident, and almost

stunned at the noise, Mrs. Denningham, having assured herself that the children were not in reality hurt, was glad to retreat from this scene of confusion; but before she left Mrs. Paterson, she earnestly entreated her not to risk the safety of her little ones by placing them again in the hammock. Her friend, who was a very tender mother, for this once consented to follow the dictates of prudence and good sense, in preference to the wild chimeras of her own imagination.

"But the mats, my dear Mrs. Denningham," said she; "you will not give up all thoughts of them surely! That cannot injure any one, and the plan will certainly be beneficial by employing the poor."

"I think it might," replied her friend, unwilling as well as herself to give up the newly suggested plan. "I will think of it, and let you know; but I think I must consult Mr. Morland about it before I decide."

After some trivial conversation on indifferent subjects, the ladies took their leave of Mrs. Paterson, and proceeded to the house of lady Ann Marvel. On being announced, they found her ladyship lost in deep contemplation; and, to the no small horror of Julia, she beheld a scull, marked with black lines in various directions, as dividing it into separate sections. Mrs. Denningham, accustomed to the singular pursuits of her ladyship, could not forbear smiling at the visible surprise of her niece.

Lady Ann started up as from a profound reverie, and with the most gracious air her meager countenance could assume, to receive her visitors.—"I was really so lost in thought, that I scarcely saw you approach. I beg ten thousand pardons, dear Mrs. Denningham; but I know you will excuse me, when I tell you, I have been studying the most interesting subject in creation. This scull has afforded me more amusement than you can imagine; I am quite enraptured with the art of studying a person's disposition by the formation of their sculls. For instance, I can tell the disposition of the man who once owned that scull on the table, as well as if he were here this moment: it is, indeed, a most entertaining study," said she, taking up the scull, and handling

it with the same easy nonchalance she would her snuff-box. She then pointed out the various bones, as classed by the most celebrated craniologists: "This is the organ of destructiveness, and that of constructiveness, and that of amativeness," said her ladyship. "See, the organ of destructiveness is in this subject uncommonly prominent; and to prove how true is this new system, I must tell you, that I know from authority, that this is the scull of a murderer, who was hung for the crime, and his body dissected. By great interest I was allowed the loan of it; for I greatly preferred studying a real scull, to any wooden painted semblance of one. I have overcome all prejudices, and care no more for handling this untenanted mansion of an ethereal soul, than I do for taking hold of my fan, or a box of

bons-bons. Here, child, take it, and look over the different lines I have drawn on it; it will perhaps amuse you," said her ladyship as she presented the scull to Julia; who, half fearful of offending lady Ann by her childish fears and prejudices, dared not openly refuse it, yet trembled with horror at the idea of taking hold of such a terrific object as the scull of a murderer. Trembling with fear, she had well nigh let it fall from her hands. Her aunt, happening that moment to observe her emotion, and that she looked uncommonly pale, felt for her distress, and kindly apologized for the weakness she evinced, in being unable to handle a scull with the same composure her ladyship did.

"But a girl of fifteen, you know, lady Ann, cannot be expected to act

with such fortitude and superior sense as one of your ladyship's talents."

This compliment brought a smile on the ghastly features of lady Ann, which made her look almost as frightful as the cause of poor Julia's alarm.

Two ladies were now announced; one a relation of her ladyship, a Mrs. Marvel; and the other a young lady of the name of Popplewell. After the usual salutations were over, the ladies entered into conversation with Mrs. Denningham and her niece on various subjects; but lady Ann, wholly engrossed by her favourite study, persisted in introducing craniology to the notice of her visitors. She read them a long catalogue of the remarks and notes on the different heads she had herself stu-

died; and concluded by modestly asserting, that none she had ever seen equalled her own for the good qualities it evidently indicated. She then ran on a long string of technical terms, to prove that her scull was cast in such a mould, as to endow her with every amiable and prudent disposition.

Miss Popplewell chose to appear rather sceptical, while her friend contented herself with expressing her astonishment.

Mrs. Denningham and Julia did not think proper to dispute the point in question, but could not repress the smile of incredulity. Probably this was perceived by lady Ann, and, with the more *apparent* scepticism of Miss Popplewell, served to irritate the tenacious

temper of her ladyship. Angry remarks and hints were thrown out by both ladies; argument succeeded argument, till both the disputants, forgetting the decorum of good breeding, flatly contradicted each other. It was in vain that Mrs. Denningham and Mrs. Marvel endeavoured to appease their anger, and to change the topic of conversation, which had, unhappily, produced so much altercation.

"Indeed, lady Ann," said Miss Popplewell, "I must say, I feel myself insulted by your remarks on the formation of my scull: I think them very illiberal. And, as to your own pretensions to all the cardinal virtues, I cannot believe you are entitled to that distinction: I think my own scull quite as well formed as your ladyship's. I can

easily imagine, you have in perfection the organ of *constructiveness*, and that of *destructiveness* too; if by that may be comprehended the wish to invent *accusations*, in the intention to destroy *reputations!*" Miss Popplewell here cast a look of malignant irony on lady Ann, which her ladyship as graciously retorted.

"Well, Miss Popplewell, I can bear with your temper, I hope; for those who *have* their sculls so unhappily distinguished as *yours* is, must be expected to be of a *warm temper*," said she, with an affected smirk, bridling up her stiff head and scraggy neck.

"Really, ma'am, this is too much; these ladies shall be my judge," said her opponent.

"I dare you to follow my example," said the exasperated lady, tearing off her bonnet, and entreating Mrs. Denningham to feel her head, and judge by the scull that stood near on the table, ready marked out for the study of craniology.

Lady Ann, in the height of her indignation, forgot that the jetty ringlets which adorned her brows were not the growth of her own pericranium, but purchased at her ladyship's hairdresser's. In displacing her head-dress, the borrowed curls fell to the ground. Not heeding this, (at any other time, *calamitous event,*) she bared her head for inspection. A few scattered locks of grizzle gray fell over her wrinkled brow; but the upper part of her head was so bald and bare, that it might have

served Spurzheim himself as a study,—a living subject for the exercise of his inventive faculties.

Advancing towards Miss Popplewell, lady Ann cast such a withering glance at that equally enraged damsel, that she retreated from the awful scowl, really terrified. She might well have exclaimed, "Shake not your *hoary* locks at me," for the frowns of her ladyship still pursued her, till, somewhat soothed by the conciliating manners of Mrs. Denningham and the entreaties of Mrs. Marvel, both ladies were prevailed on to be more calm, and to give up the point in debate.

Poor Julia, all this time silent from terror and astonishment, was delighted when her aunt proposed to take leave.

As soon as they had left the house, and she once more found herself safely seated in the carriage, she exclaimed, "Dear aunt, is it possible lady Ann can be in her right senses?—surely she cannot! Did you ever hear of such conduct?—I was really so frightened, I could not tell where I was; if you had not been with me, I should have run out of the house as I would out of Bedlam."

"My sweet girl," observed her aunt, "I can easily believe your alarm was great, at the very strange scene you have just witnessed. Lady Ann conducted herself exceedingly ill. I have, of late, been so much disgusted by her pertinacity and ill humour, I believe I shall drop her acquaintance."

Julia was greatly rejoiced at this intelligence, and, in better spirits, accompanied her aunt to Mrs. Oldbury's, another acquaintance of Mrs. Denningham's.

CHAPTER V.

When Mrs. Denningham and her niece arrived at Mrs. Oldbury's, Julia could not help remarking to herself that they seemed fated to meet with singular events this morning, for the first appearance of this lady was calculated to excite the surprise of the most inattentive observer: she was so completely disguised by an immense pair of green gogglers, that it was scarcely possible to recognise their old acquaintance. She advanced to receive them with all her accustomed cordiality, totally regardless of her singular appearance. As she moved from her seat, a piece of her gown (which had been

nearly torn off from the train) hung dangling over her shoe, with the needle and thread in it, which proved that she had intended to repair the fracture, however strange the method adopted of doing so while on her person. Unfortunately Fido, her pet lap-dog, perceived the fluttering fragment, and running hastily towards his mistress, he sprang upon it with such eagerness, that he set his little soft foot right on the point of the needle, which was left awkwardly sticking out of the work Mrs. Oldbury had been engaged with. A hideous yell was the consequence of poor Fido's disaster; and some moments after the arrival of the visitors were employed in soothing the irritated feelings of the little animal, who held up his wounded paw with the needle still sticking in it, and whined out his reproaches to his

mistress for her carelessness in leaving it in his way; and yet, so very ridiculous was the whole circumstance, that the party could not forbear smiling at the cause of his misfortune. Mrs. Oldbury, with perfect good humour, explained the reason of their having found her thus employed. Having, she said, studied optics till she was nearly blind, she had determined to try how she could work with her gogglers on; and having just before rent the train of her dress by unluckily stepping her foot through it, she took that up as being work nearest at hand. Her friend politely assured her, that no apology was necessary to them, if she would pardon their intrusion; but, both our heroine and her aunt observed, that Mrs. Oldbury had, either from carelessness of appearance, or entire absence of mind,

begun to repair her dress with a piece of cotton of quite a different pattern and texture.

"Surely," thought Julia, "the Miss Alvingtons were justified in their assertion, that my aunt associates with "all the oddities in town," for so the young ladies had expressed themselves in her hearing. But, upon further acquaintance, she found much to admire, and still more to esteem, in the sentiments and manners of Mrs. Oldbury. Singular in her notions, she was not dictatorial or pedantic; on the contrary, so mild and affable, that her society was courted by all ranks and all ages. She knew how to amuse and trifle, with the most amiable condescension, though of such superior abilities as to entitle her to associate with the most eminent literary

characters. Our heroine had not been one hour in her company, before she regretted they must so soon be deprived of her society.

With such eminent talents as Mrs. Oldbury undoubtedly possessed, it was lamented by her real friends, that she did not conform (in dress and other little non-essentials) to the customs of the world in general. "Singularity," as Mrs. Mordaunt had often justly observed to her daughter and Julia, "is a foible in whomsoever it may be observed: it is frequently the *weakness* of a superior mind, but not the *proof* of strong intellect; it is decidedly never estimable, whether it spring from vanity, or carelessness of the opinion of the world." And such would have been her remark, had she been once in the company of

Mrs. Oldbury. This lady had, she said, been studying optics, and at last persuaded herself so much of the necessity of guarding the organ of vision from external injury, that she resolved to wear gogglers, which were then newly invented; and she, accordingly, for some time continued to wear them. She had not long been in the habit of wearing them when Mrs. Denningham called on her; the subject of optics was yet fresh in her mind, and she earnestly begged her friend would adopt the same plan for herself and nieces.

Julia laughed at the idea of one so young as she was wearing spectacles. Laura, she was certain, would soon laugh her aunt out of such a singular whim; indeed, to say the truth, she hoped her sister would not like her-

self to wear the frightful green goggglers.

Before Mrs. Denningham went away, Mrs. Oldbury hinted a plan for the benefit of her school-children; which was, that each of them should have a pair of green glasses like her own, "in order," as she said, "to preserve their sight perfect to an advanced age; and this was the only method of doing so, by being careful of it when young."

This in itself was good advice; "But surely," thought her visitors, "there can be no necessity for encumbering children with artificial helps to the power of vision; their employments do not commonly tend to overstrain the optic nerves."

But Mrs. Oldbury, though too well bred to be positive on the subject, yet evidently was self-convinced of the utility of children's wearing green goggglers.

Mrs. Denningham's natural good sense taught her to consider the matter altogether as absurd in the extreme; but she did not positively *refuse* to adopt the plan.

After a long chit-chat on various other subjects, Julia and her aunt returned home quite wearied out, though quite amused, with their morning visits. The former had enough to relate to her sister, who joined heartily in the laugh which the recital of their peregrinations excited. Laura was in uncommonly good

humour with Julia, and, for a wonder, told her "she could be an amusing droll little creature when she liked, but never so much so as when laughing at the quizzical acquaintance of old aunty."

Our heroine did not much like this disrespectful style of language, when speaking of her aunt or her friends; though not daring to say this to Laura, she suffered it to pass unnoticed. But, in her secret thoughts, she lamented that her sister should be so much led away by the Miss Alvingtons, and others of her acquaintance, to despise those whom her aunt, her dearest friend, esteemed; especially Mrs. Oldbury, who had gained much in the estimation of Julia during her short visit. As to lady Ann and Miss Popplewell, they were not to be classed among the *friends*,

scarcely the *acquaintance*, of Mrs. Denningham; their follies she could therefore more freely laugh at.

The next day, the family of the Denninghams, accompanied by the Miss Alyingtons, sir Carroll O'Neal, and his friend captain Kinmore, set out for the Priory; and as nothing material occurred on the journey, the reader will excuse my hurrying them over the next two days, and will follow me to the account of their arrival at Westcombe.

It was a lovely morning in June when the carriage stopped at the lodge. Old Dorcas came out to greet her mistress and the young ladies, but looked at first amazed at what she styled "such a *mort* of fine company." Bustling in for the key of the great gates, she called for her

good man the old gardener, who next made his appearance, rather disconcerted at not being in his full dress; for none of the servants had expected the family would arrive so soon in the day.

"Well, Matthew, how goes on the garden? have you any flowers for us?" said Mrs. Denningham, addressing the old man with her wonted tone of good-natured affability.

Quite recovered from his embarrassment by the condescension of his respected mistress, Matthew smilingly replied, "O yes, ma'am, we have a power of *racclusses*, and *nunclusses* out of number; but some of the flowers and plants, madam, you sent us, that comed from across the seas, *they* be all dead: there was no help for it, my lady; but

then we have a glorious show of Grand Turks and Bath nosegays, with the finest *rhodydundrums* you ever beheld: and the finest blossoms on the fruit trees we had this spring; we shall have a main sight of fruit to pick from the old trees up yonder in the Prior's garden: there will be a fine show of peaches and nectarines, I do expect."

Mrs. Denningham, thinking that the old man had by this time said his say, was about to order the man to drive on, but she was as soon checked in her intention; for Matthew, as if suddenly recollecting some sad disaster, again approached the carriage, and with a doleful countenance began again:

"Madam, I had like to have forgot to tell you of one misfortune."

"Well, what is the matter? nothing happened to any of the servants I hope," said his mistress, with some alarm, really disturbed by the solemnity of his manner.

"Why, madam, there are none of the servants hurt; thank God, they be all *pure;* but Adam has had his head blown off, and Eve has lost her arm and her hand that held the apple; but the great serpent is as flourishing as ever round the old tree. And then there is St. George and the dragon very well, but only the dragon lost his tail the last high winds; it stood up rather awkwardly always, to my mind."

Here honest Matthew was stopped in his lamentation by the ill-repressed laughter of the young ladies, who now

comprehended the nature of the misfortune he so deeply deplored. Julia had whispered to the Miss Alvingtons, that those same wounded and mighty paragons were no other than old yew trees, cut into grotesque figures; some meant to be like human forms, and designated as the gardener had informed them.

Mrs. Denningham could not forbear joining in the mirth of the youthful party, to the no small amazement of old Matthew, who stood as if doubting the evidence of his senses; for he had been, from his boyish days, accustomed to view these same antique figures,—these monuments of former times, with the most profound awe and veneration. Yet, not willing on this occasion to be the only sorrowful being in company, his hard features gradually relaxed into a

smile: he very composedly produced the ponderous keys of the lodge gates, and as deliberately set about opening the latter.

Matthew, the very reverse of his aged dame, was all steadiness and precision; nothing ever could put him out of his own precise way of proceeding. For this reason he had preferred having the care of the lodge, to making one of the establishment at the Priory; in which caprice Mrs. Denningham had indulged him, in consideration of the many years of faithful servitude he had spent in her family. Matthew still retained the situation of what he termed head gardener, having a boy to work under his directions; and Dorcas, his bustling honest dame, in like manner superintended the dairy. Both were firmly attached to

the interests of their mistress, from the affability and liberality she had evinced towards them and the rest of her domestics, during the many years they had been in her service.

As the carriage passed rapidly on through the old avenue that led to the Priory, the Miss Alvingtons, who had never before been at Westcombe, were each engaged in admiring the venerable structure.

"Oh delightful!" exclaimed Miss Honoria; "how charming this must be by moonlight! In this cool sequestered shade I could live for ever," said she, with her usual sentimental drawl of affectation.

"With a black veil and a rosary, you

would fancy yourself a second Heloise, no doubt," retorted her sister.

"O no, the fair Constantia would suit Honoria better," said Laura; and Kinmore would make a most excellent Theodore. Your sister must have a father confessor," added she playfully; "cannot we, aunt, furnish poor Kinmore with a suitable dress from out of the old stores at the Priory?"

Honoria, unmindful, or feigning to be so, of the ridicule cast on her predilection for monastic seclusion, still continued soliloquising in the same strain of affected romance: "Oh! what a solemn stillness reigns around!" said she, with a deep sigh, as if she were indeed about to be sacrificed at the altar of superstition, instead of sharing with

her young companions in the gay delights of mirth and festivity.

Unfortunately for the lady's sentimental ejaculation, the great house-dog, at that instant hearing the approach of the carriage, set up such a tremendous howl and bark, as made even Miss Alvington herself for once forget her whining tone of sensibility, and exclaim, in her natural voice, "Good God, we shall all be torn to pieces by that frightful beast; why he is, I declare, more like a young lion than a dog: I hope he will not make a spring at us," said she, with real terror depicted on her countenance, which, this time at least, was true to nature in its expression.

"You need not be the least alarmed," said Julia, feeling for the distress of

Honoria: "I assure you he is as gentle as a lamb to any one of us; he will not attempt to hurt you." To prove the truth of this, she sprang out of the carriage the very moment the step was let down, and in an instant was by the side of her old favourite Leo, who, delighted to feel the gentle pat of her well-remembered hand, fawned and played all the frolicsome tricks of a kitten, which, with his bulky form and rude gestures, appeared truly ridiculous.

By thus suffering him to amuse himself, Julia succeeded in keeping Leo at a respectful distance from the carriage, while the rest of the party alighted. But unluckily for the timid fears of Honoria, the poor faithful creature, chancing suddenly to espy Mrs. Denningham, darted forward with such a

tremendous bound, that he nearly pushed the young lady down; so delighted was he to see his old mistress.

Poor Honoria ran shrieking into the house, and made the old wainscot hall re-echo with her exclamations of terror.

All the servants, as if called together by an alarm bell, came running in the utmost dismay, to know the cause of such an extraordinary outcry. Among the foremost was the old housekeeper, who was before hastening to receive her mistress. "Lawk! miss, what's the matter?" said she, with the utmost consternation depicted on her countenance. "Nothing happened, I hope, to you, miss, or the other ladies?" said she, taking hold of the half-fainting Honoria, and good-naturedly supporting her.

"Oh! the dog, the dog!" replied the young lady, looking toward the door.

Julia, Laura, and the other Miss Alvington now made their appearance, and more clearly explained the cause of Honoria's alarm; when the old housekeeper could not forbear smiling at what she thought the silly fears of their visitor.

"Is that all?" said she, with a truly ludicrous expression of blended disappointment and surprise. "Lawk! miss, you must be very very *narvish*, to be so soon afeard. Poor Leo would not have hurt you: but may be you be subject to them *historical* fits. Come this way, miss: would you please to step into my room for a minute, and take a few of my

Sir Carroll, during this panegyric of his countrymen, evinced, by the hilarity of his own countenance and manners, the most undeniable proof of their and his claim to the justice of the eulogium he had pronounced on the *gaieté de cœur* of the Irish.

There was a singular contrast in the disposition of these two Irishmen. That of sir Carroll is better known to the reader than that of his friend Kinmore, who, beneath the semblance of thoughtless levity, concealed his real motives. He had succeeded in ingratiating himself into the favour of his good-natured companion, who, with a heart open as the day, gave not a thought to the future. Sir Carroll believed all those his friends, who professed themselves such. Kinmore he was firmly attached to; and he

had, to his own loss, very frequently assisted that insidious hypocrite, who, with an eye only to the fortune of his credulous dupe, had led him on from one folly to another, till he had given him such a passion for gaming, that at the time when sir Carroll left Ireland, he was obliged to mortgage the greatest part of his beautiful estate near Killarney.

Kinmore had in the mean time gained a considerable sum, his share of the pillage that he and his vile associates had made of the ample fortune of the thoughtless Sir Carroll; yet Kinmore conducted his plans so artfully, that to the Denninghams he appeared the most disinterested friend, the most prudent adviser, of the young baronet. The undeviating attachment he showed for

"Besides, it was all in the way of trade," observed Kinmore: "the holy fathers, no doubt, could sell them a few *indulgences.*"

"By my faith and I did not think of that; Kinmore, you are before hand with me there: but Denningham must show me his horses. What hunters have ye?—do you ever turn out a stag here?—have you a good pack of hounds?" inquired the lively Hibernian, in one breath; deeming *these* indispensable requisites in the country, particularly with such a noble estate as Westcombe Priory.

Charles could scarcely persuade him, that he had neither. "The estate," he said, "was his aunt's for her life; and his own fortune being comparatively small,

he could not, even if he had the wish, launch out into the style of life sir Carroll had imagined he could: besides, he was of late years very seldom at the Priory; and, moreover, he was not yet of age."

"Och! I see how it is, you are yet under trammels, my boy; but I hope yet to see the day, when you shall go a hunting with me, over there in dear little Ireland: there are the lads of spirit for ye;—they will soon teach you what hunting and drinking is;—and, on my soul, what do we live for but to enjoy ourselves? and in Ireland they have got the knack of making the most of their time that way: all the world over that's well known. Leave Paddy alone; he will be merry, where any other man would break his heart."

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sir Carroll, his guarded manner when the violence of his friend's temper would break out, when in the least opposed in any favourite scheme, had won the esteem of Mrs. Denningham; who, capable herself of the most exalted friendship, doubted not for a moment the sincerity of Kinmore's professions.

Having so far won the good will of the old lady, it was no difficult matter to obtain an invitation to the Priory, which was exactly what Kinmore had been aiming at; for he by no means liked the thoughts of being separated from sir Carroll, till he could prevail on him to return to Ireland; and once there, he thought he should make sure of a part of the handsome dowry sir Carroll would receive with Laura Denningham.

Pleasing himself with these nefarious schemes, the cold-hearted villain acted his part to perfection: he danced, sang, flirted with the Miss Alvingtons, assisted Julia in her drawing or music, played cards with Mrs. Denningham, and rode out with her nephew to call on their different neighbours; in short, Kinmore came with the determination to make himself agreeable to all parties, and he fully succeeded.

CHAPTER VI.

JULIA, once again at the Priory, felt more happy than ever; for Laura, (from being in the midst of continual gaiety, and having the prospect of receiving as much company as she pleased, when, as the wife of sir Carroll, she should preside at her own house,) was more complaisant than usual to her sister.

Young and inconsiderate, her vanity was flattered by the idea of becoming, as she expressed herself, "her own mistress." The love of power, and the love of dissipation, reigned triumphant in her breast. The almost certainty of

gratifying her utmost hopes softened the harshness of her temper; and even Julia was treated with kindness: she was allowed to share in the benefit of the change, which had taken place in the manners of this haughty, spoiled child of indulgence.

Happy, because all around her seemed happy, Julia hastened to impart a share of her present felicity to her constant favourite, Jane Mordaunt: delighted to be again restored to the society of Mrs. Mordaunt and her daughter, Julia, while the other ladies were engaged in arranging their dress after the journey, hastened to the cottage, certain of being joyfully welcomed by both her friends.

During this last visit of Laura at the

Priory, previous to her marriage, Mrs. Denningham frequently invited Miss Mordaunt, to join the parties of pleasure made for the young people then assembled at her house. This attention to Jane was a great annoyance to the Miss Alvingtons, instead of an agreeable acquisition, as would have been imagined, by any but such as were in the secret of their hopes and fears, as to the result of their present visit. These apt scholars of their artful mother, and adviser in their plans, were more than commonly quick in perceiving the interest their dreaded rival had already excited in the *esteem*, if not the *affections*, of Charles Denningham. They now concluded, they had for a certainty discovered the real cause of his indifference for their superior attractions; they despised, yet secretly feared the

influence of the innocent object of their aversion.

Jane Mordaunt, contrary to their belief, remained wholly ignorant of the preference they so much envied her for: the Miss Alvingtons imagined it more likely, that her apparent unconsciousness was a mere artifice, practised the better to secure her conquest.

But the more candid reader will readily imagine it possible, that a girl of seventeen, brought up in retirement, and under the vigilant eye of a tender and prudent mother, should be ignorant of those notions of coquetry and rage for conquest, which the Miss Alvingtons had acquired, by associating only with the most dissipated and trifling among the votaries of fashion.

Simple and unaffected in manners, though not distinguished for beauty, Jane Mordaunt pleased by the native elegance of her deportment and the sweetness of her disposition; and the cultivation of her mind gave her, in the estimation of the few who formed her circle of friends and acquaintance, charms superior to those distinguished for beauty, who appeared too conscious of their claim to admiration.

Modest and retiring, but not awkwardly embarrassed in company, Jane Mordaunt did not, perhaps, *at first*, gain that attention, which Laura Denningham or the Miss Alvingtons attracted in general society: hers was a mind, a character, which improved, which won on the heart imperceptibly. Inobtrusive as she was, and diffident of

her own power to please, it was impossible to be in her company without esteeming her; and never was there a greater contrast than between her and the Miss Alvingtons. This conviction was so impressed on the mind of Charles Denningham, that never were the plans of sir George Alvington and his lady so likely to be frustrated as at this time, while their daughters were on this much wished for visit to Mrs. Denningham.

Sir George had confidently calculated, "that one or other of the girls would succeed in winning the heart of young Denningham."

Contrasted with the delicacy and real elegance of Jane, how disgusting was the sentimental affectation of Honoria,

or the pert flippancy of Georgina! Thus thought Charles as he continued his solitary ramble in the park. His friends that morning he had left for a short time only, hoping, while they were engaged with the ladies, he could steal, unperceived by them, to the cottage, and pay a visit to his old friend, Mrs. Mordaunt. He had long wished to make some inquiries of her after Henry, who, being now in the navy, could be but seldom at home. Perhaps, too, another motive, which he would not so readily own even to himself, led Charles Denningham towards the humble residence of the Mordaunts. Cannot the fair reader guess, that the hope of seeing the lovely *daughter*, as well as the worthy mother, was another very probable reason? Be that as it may, Charles had just crossed the park, and was entering the

little wood path that led to the cottage, when he perceived his sister and Jane Mordaunt at the farther extremity of it. A moment afterward he was by their side, and, giving an arm to each, insisted on attending them in their walk. This neither lady refused; and he accompanied them to Mrs. Mordaunt's, delighted at not having missed them; as it gave him now an opportunity of having the pleasure of conversing with Jane, uninterrupted by the intrusive impertinence of the Miss Alvingtons.

Never did a more happy trio enter the humble dwelling of Mrs. Mordaunt, than Charles, Julia, and Jane. Mrs. Mordaunt welcomed them with good-humoured raillery; and inquired what they had done with their gay com-

panions, meaning Laura and the Alvingtons.

"We left them all apparently very agreeably employed, in listening to the gallant speeches of sir Carroll and captain Kinmore. They are more *au fait* at these things than I can possibly hope to be," said Charles: "the ladies always give the preference to the *red coats;* I have no chance with them," added he.

"Not *always*, I should imagine," said Mrs. Mordaunt, with a half suppressed sigh, as her mind involuntarily reverted to one she had formerly herself given a preference to: he who had long since been numbered with the dead again lived in her imagination.—"The life of her who marries a military man must,

from the nature of his profession, be a continual succession of anxious hopes and fears, and a most severe trial of her fortitude," said that amiable woman, as she reverted in thought to the hardships she had endured, and the anxious cares that had marked her own past life.

"I think I have heard Jane say, she would never marry a man in the army," said Julia; "so you find, brother, *all* ladies are not so mightily taken with a red coat, as you pretend to think."

Charles owned that he had passed too general an accusation, and acknowledged himself in the wrong; but in so animated a manner, and with such a brightened glow on his cheek, that it was evident he was more than commonly pleased; and rejoiced to hear,

that Jane was not likely to be taken with the gay manners of the Irish captain, lately arrived at the Priory.

Miss Mordaunt, perceiving the subject lately alluded to recalled painful reflections to the mind of her mother, purposely changed the topic of conversation, and began to speak of her brother; whom they expected home soon, to spend some time with them, after having been three years absent from England.

This was an event, which both Mrs. Mordaunt and her daughter anxiously anticipated; for Henry was to them their every hope, and his return was to be celebrated at the Priory and at the Cottage as a kind of jubilee.

"The last letter we received was from Sicily," said Jane, in reply to Charles's inquiry after his former companion: "he wrote in excellent spirits, and assured us he was never in better health in his life."

"The climate of Sicily is excellent," said Charles. "I am glad he was not sent to the West Indies; as it was apprehended he would be, when last I heard of him."

"His captain received orders to sail for Sicily, where they have remained stationed ever since," said Mrs. Mordaunt: "but I very much fear my poor boy will be obliged, after all, to go to the West Indies; which is what I dread particularly, for it may well be styled the grave of the Europeans, the climate is

so fatal to the young men sent out there. But I must hope the best; as a sailor, Henry must take his chance," said she; not wishing, by her fears for the future destiny of her son, to damp the joy they all felt in the hope of seeing him so soon.

The morning being uncommonly fine, Mrs. Mordaunt consented to accompany the young people to the school-house, and to overlook the employment of the children, as she had been accustomed to do in the absence of Mrs. Denningham; who, being now particularly engaged in preparation for the wedding, which was so soon to take place, had begged her friend to continue her kind offices at the school. From the circumstance of her having so much company at this time at the Priory, it was not in

the power of Mrs. Denningham to superintend them herself as formerly.

Mrs. Mordaunt, when her declining health would permit of the exertion, usually went two or three times every week, to see that the children were properly attended to, and that they received due rewards for their industry or improvement.

Just as our party had reached the school-house, they met Mrs. Denningham with the ladies, escorted by sir Carroll O'Neal and captain Kinmore.

"My young friends have taken a fancy to see my school-children," said she; "but Laura seems to think such a party of us will terrify the poor things out of their senses."

"What a noise they are making, aunt!" said Laura: "what can be the matter?"

"Oh, nothing; only the old dame is wielding her birchen sceptre," said sir Carroll; "it will be charity to her poor little subjects to go in and put an end to her tyranny: I should like, this minute, to turn them all out on this green to play. The poor little devils would like it much better than being bothered with their A B C."

Mrs. Denningham opened the school-door, and the whole party entered; but, to their utter astonishment, they beheld as many as twenty children, of various ages, ranged on either side of the room; each wearing an enormous pair of green gogglers.

"Oh! the little green-eyed monsters!" exclaimed Miss Honoria.

"They have been studying optics," said her sister, "of Mrs. Oldbury, I would lay my life."

"Och! by St. Patrick, even my fine mare Sheelah O'Reilly could not stand this, though she was never known to start in her life;" vociferated sir Carroll.

"What can be the meaning of all this?" inquired Mrs. Mordaunt, greatly surprised; yet certain it must be a new whim of her eccentric friend, who now came forward to explain this very singular circumstance. She acknowledged, that Mrs. Oldbury had sent the gogglers for the children, and they were

accordingly sent to the school that morning; as she thought she should not refuse the kindness of that lady, and probably offend her by the rejection of her present: and besides, Mrs. Oldbury seemed perfectly convinced of the utility of the gogglers in preserving the sight; in consequence of which she had given strict orders to the school-mistress, to make each of the children wear a pair of gogglers, while they continued with her during the school-hours.

But this same decree had been with the utmost difficulty enforced: the good old dame in vain coaxed some, and whipped others; the little rebels so much preferred their own eyes, as nature had given them, that it required all the authority their teacher was mistress of, to oblige them to wear the

hated gogglers. Even at the moment when the visitors from the Priory were present, the audible sobs continued to be heard, in spite of the frowns and dumb threats of the dame. One or two of the boldest ventured to slip the gogglers above their brows, and to peep their little laughing eyes from under the green orbs that glared through their flaxen curls. Their appearance was so truly ludicrous, that none of the company could look at them without laughing: Laura and the Alvingtons did not attempt to restrain their expressions of mirth, but continued ridiculing and laughing at this strange whim; and the gentlemen joined them most heartily in the laugh. As such a boisterous party as this had never before entered the school-house, the dame looked quite perplexed: she disliked the new-fangled ways of

making young children like old people; but she did not choose to risk offending Mrs. Denningham by plainly declaring her opinion.

Julia, out of respect to her aunt, would not join, more than she could possibly help, in the excessive mirth of Laura and the young ladies with her; but it was utterly impossible to help laughing at first sight of the little creatures so strangely disguised.

Jane Mordaunt and Charles, from a similar motive, followed her good example; unwilling to wound the feelings of one so truly worthy, though eccentric, as Mrs. Denningham.

While most of the party were engaged in commenting on the green gogglers,

Mrs. Mordaunt took her friend aside, and remonstrated with her on the inutility, not to say folly, of persisting in Mrs. Oldbury's plan. Convinced of the absurdity of this unaccountable whim, Mrs. Denningham gave up the point; and the children were, to their unfeigned delight, released from their bondage, and again allowed the full use of their eyes, unencumbered by green gogglers.

On their return to the Priory, Mrs. Denningham consulted with her friend respecting a manufactory among the poor for making matting, such as Mrs. Paterson had lent her a specimen of; which she was very desirous for Mrs. Mordaunt to see, thinking she must approve of *this* new scheme, however she disliked the last mentioned. But here, too, she was disappointed; for Mrs.

Mordaunt decidedly said it would not succeed; and it would, besides, be much better to encourage the art of spinning and knitting, or twenty other employments, more likely by far to benefit the poor.

But, sanguine in her expectations, our visionary could not so easily be prevailed on to give up all thought of the matting manufactory, as she had the use of the green gogglers: "she would first," she said, "hear what Mr. Morland had to say on the business."

It must be allowed, in justice to Mrs. Denningham, that *all* her disappointments with respect to benefitting the poor were not owing to her own want of judgment; but sometimes her very best, and most rational plans, were

thwarted by the perverseness and ignorance of the peasantry, whose welfare she sought to promote.

For instance, she had one year, owing to the scarcity and high price of bread, purchased at a great expense an immense quantity of rice, and given out in portions, (according to the number in family,) to the different poor people in the neighbourhood; but, instead of being grateful for her bounty, the greater number of the pensioners declared, that "eating rice would make them blind; and that they could not eat it, even to *oblige* madam."—"Besides, what use was it giving them *rice*, unless she gave them *butter* and *sugar* to eat with it!"

Another time, when she had made for them a great quantity of excellent soup,

to give as the rice had been; after the first week, not one of all the poor people came to fetch it. On inquiry, she found, that owing to her having unfortunately purchased the large copper, (in which the soup was boiled,) of a friend of hers, a physician, who had just left the village of Westcombe, the prejudiced people had taken it into their heads, that he had used the copper to boil dead bodies in, to prepare them as skeletons for his anatomical studies. Nothing could do away this absurd notion: it was urged in vain by the housekeeper, that her mistress was certain the boiler had been used only for brewing. It was impossible to convince the stubborn multitude, "that the doctor had never boiled his *notamies* in it;" for so they expressed themselves.

This method of relieving the poor was obliged to be given up, and another, more thankfully accepted, adopted in its stead. Small portions of corn and potatoes being distributed, crowds of pensioners arrived daily at the gates of the Priory; who with unfeigned gratitude received the gift of charity, and the name of Mrs. Denningham was blessed as the generous benefactress of the indigent; thus evincing, that, even in doing good, discrimination and judgment must guide the benevolent donor; and regard to the popular prejudices of those they wish to relieve must be observed, or their most laudable endeavours may prove ineffectual.

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Denningham had, previous to her quitting London, resolved, on the marriage of Laura, to part with her house in town, and reside for the future entirely at Westcombe. Nothing could be more agreeable to the wishes of Julia than this arrangement; and the Mordaunts participated warmly in her satisfaction, as they should now be more frequently together than hitherto had been possible, from Mrs. Denningham's frequent visits of several months to the metropolis.

To Julia the pleasure of enjoying the society of her amiable friends wholly

uninterrupted was in part a compensation for the expected departure of her sister. Laura, it had been agreed, was to set off for Ireland immediately on her marriage; and, little as she herself felt at the idea of a separation from those who had nurtured her infancy, and loved her with the tenderness of a parent and a sister, the affectionate Julia deeply regretted its necessity.

Laura, on the contrary, felt not the loss of Julia's society, or the unbounded indulgence of her aunt. She now only anticipated the admiration she should excite on her first appearance in Dublin as a bride, entitled as she would be, from her own and her husband's rank, to mix in the first circles of that gay metropolis.

Westcombe Priory, the family residence of the Denninghams, was a beautiful and massy pile of building, situate in the most remote part of the north of Devon, not far from the small sea-port of Ilfracombe. The country around is beautifully grand, and imposing in the extreme; but the Priory itself did not command the most striking points of view. The reverend founder of this monastic seclusion had preferred the calm shelter of a wooded vale to the towering heights, that hung their frowning steeps over the ever restless flood that roared beneath.

Deep in the bosom of the combe or glen, the venerable walls of the Priory seemed to derive an added sanctity from the calm stillness that reigned

'around: all seemed to conspire to lull the busy thoughts of worldly ambition, and insensibly to breathe into the heart a purer emotion, a more dignified hope, than aught the world itself could realize. The spirit of devotion had consecrated the spot, and gave a solemn but pleasing grandeur to the surrounding scenery.

The combe, or valley, from which the Priory took its name, was beautifully wooded, and formed a striking contrast to the bare craggy heights, which rose above in proud magnificence. The grounds in the immediate vicinity of the building were now tastefully adorned, but still preserved the peculiar character of the original plan.

The Hospitalier, or Pilgrim's Lodge, situate at the farther extremity of the

domain, was now converted into an entrance or porter's lodge, from which the road led through the park to the principal front of the Priory, which lost none of its peculiar beauty by this modern arrangement. The gray walls and antique form of the massy pile shone conspicuous, yet partially shaded amid the dark foliage of the clumps of yew and cypress, which, according to ancient custom, formed so predominant a feature in the gardens of the Priory.

Still more distant, groves of aged oaks waved their venerable branches; and appeared, by their magnitude, coeval with the structure they sheltered from the rude blasts of the tempest.

Still deeper in the vale rose the ruins of the chapel, just seen in melancholy

decay, tinted by the various lichens and mosses that adorned its broken fragments.

The hollow murmur of the breeze, passing amid the solemn shades, that enveloped the broken arches of the chapel;—the gentle rippling of the mountain stream, that wound its insidious way beneath the covert of tangled shrubs and brambles, which partly impeded its progress; gave a charm, a soothing melancholy, to every surrounding object:—they spoke a lesson to the heirs of mortality, who yet trod its consecrated precincts. Beneath those tottering walls slept the departed fathers of the Priory; beside them lay enshrined in costly monuments their proud successors, who usurped their prede-

cessors' domains, sanctioned by the imperious will of lawless tyranny. These too lay beneath shrowded in the dust: generation after generation had fallen to decay, as the leaves of those sheltering trees, that now shaded their mortal remains. The current of life had gone by, and borne them from the heights of ambition to the still, cold vault of the sepulchre. Time had not spared the youthful or the gay, the warrior or the sage:—the blast of the tempest passed by neither the tender bud, nor the sear and mellowed leaf of autumn. Here, recorded by hands long since mouldered in the dust, stood the names and deeds of many a valiant chief, and many a tribute to departed worth. Here, too, was traced the simple pious resignation of a parent's woe, that pointed out the

tomb of youth and innocence,—death's victim even in the very spring of life, the bloom of early childhood.

From scenes like these we must now conduct the reader to the distant boundary of the Priory domains, which, stretching along the utmost verge of the coast, commanded a prospect that might have warmed the coldest heart to unbounded admiration.

The sea, roaring in wild rage beneath the craggy mass that formed the overhanging cliff, filled the deep caverns with its heaving foam, bursting in wild fury over the weedy rocks that lay at the base. The waves, dashing with never-ceasing restlessness, bounding from their rocky bed with impetuous velocity, fell again in one continual

shower, their whitened spray casting a cloud-like mist over the intervening objects;—then, receding with a tremendous rush, left the sandy beach bestrewed with the disjointed fragments recently torn from their parent rocks, or dragged by the impetuous surge from the deep caves that yawned around.

The blue hills of Wales rose in the distance, and faintly bounded the horizon. Farther down the channel to the left, the grey cliffs of Lundy, seen in imperfect haziness, stretched their faint line along the waters, blended with either element in distant obscurity. Innumerable vessels spread their whitened sails, and seemed to court the gently fanning breezes of the summer sky, to waft them to the port of opulence and commerce.

Beneath the cliff, nearer to the coast, lay dispersed (thick as insects in the evening gale) the small craft and fishing-boats belonging to the adjacent port of Combe, the entrance into which could faintly be discovered to the right, sheltered by the proud and magnificent Hillsborough, whose rocky steep towered above the neighbouring cliffs, stretching its rugged base far into the dashing flood beneath.

To return to the vicinity of the Priory and the coast adjacent, along the cliffs we were before exploring, I will call the reader's attention to a small cell midway down the cliff, partly concealed, by the rude entrance being nearly shaded from view by the marine plants that had encroached on its precincts, now untrodden, except by the

foot of some lone traveller, anxious to explore this famed relic of former superstition. Once a cell of prayer and penitence, this had been the abode of the venerable founder of the Priory, of whom wondrous tales of marvellous renown were still extant. Here he sought to mortify his flesh by abstinence the most rigorous; and, by the deepest penitence, to blot out the misdeeds of his early life.

The cave of Father Vincent was renowned throughout the country. A consecrated well of the purest water sprang from the rock adjacent, famous for its healing virtues, and from its being entirely free from all brackishness; which, from its extreme contiguity to the ocean that rolled beneath, was in former days considered as miraculous.

Over this singular fountain, in the dark ages of superstition, had been erected a gothic arch of rude workmanship. On its centre was engraved, in scarcely legible characters, a Latin inscription, warning the pilgrim who sought the salutary waters of the well, to seek likewise the waters of life; and to drink deep at the blessed fountain, whose sacred power could alone give eternal salvation, and could redeem the health of the soul, as the pure crystal wave did that of the body.

On a lofty crag, that jutted over the cave, stood the remains of a kind of chapel, dedicated to St. Nicholas, the patron of mariners. A winding path from the Priory chapel led through the

tangled underwood of the glen, to the steep ascent of the cliff. Here, in monastic times, masses had been said for those who had perished at sea: and processions were made by the holy prior and his brethren, in honour of the patron saint, from the Priory adjacent to this romantic solitary spot. Where now the sea-gull built its nest, and fostered its screaming young, the torches of the fathers had blazed, and the choral hymn had been chanted. Here, during the winter's bitter blast, the tempest's rage, the pious children of religious enthusiasm had "bided the pelting of the pitiless storm," to raise on high the holy cross of religious faith, and the consecrated banner of their saint. On that very crag they had often stood with flaming torches,

and burning brands, to guide the hapless wretches who struggled with the boiling flood beneath. To those they could not save from the devouring jaws of death, they pointed out the hope of eternal blessedness,—the hope of salvation by him who had shed his blood for them on the cross, the emblem of which they then bore in triumph to bless the dying eyes of the helpless sufferers, who, gasping with death, stretched their upraised arms to Heaven imploring mercy.

This sacred remnant of former ages,—this desolated fragment of what it had once been, had long fallen a prey to the unsparing hand of time. But its hallowed purpose, its consecrated remains, were still revered with pious awe by the pea-

santry of the adjacent hamlets: a feeling of veneration undefinable pervaded the most ignorant, whilst they gazed on the crumbling walls of this little chapel. The peasant girls would, on the anniversary of the saint, still resort thither, and on the first dawn of the day sprinkle the simple altar (that was still preserved) with the choicest flowers they could collect: for each nosegay thus bestowed, plucking, as their reward, a sprig of some wild flower that reared its uncultivated blossoms among the rude fragments of the shrine once dedicated to the patron saint. These, or the moss that clothed the rugged stones with its grey mantle of age, were by the simple village maids preserved with ignorant but guileless superstition, and considered as a safeguard to those of their friends, who

had to brave the dangers of the deep, —a charm to save them from the perils they would probably encounter.

But far different had been the fate of the cave before alluded to: this, once the gloomy asylum of a mind ever fraught with religious enthusiasm, erroneous in its faith, had of late years become the haunt of a desperate and lawless race, the hiding-place, the secure retreat of smugglers, who, in the secret inner chambers of the cavern, which extended some way under the solid rock, stored their contraband goods, unsuspected by their pursuers.

Even so late as when Mrs. Denningham came into possession of the Westcombe estates, this cell had been thus profaned: but the vigilance of the of-

ficers in the neighbouring town had at length detected the practice; and, the secret being once made known, no more of the late lawless intruders dared venture to shelter themselves or their stores in the far-famed cave of Father Vincent, or there to pledge his saintship in full bumpers of pure Geneva, as had till lately been their custom.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the day fixed, and not long after their return to the Priory, Laura Denningham became the wife of sir Carroll O'Neal; and immediately proceeded to Dublin, and thence to his estate near the beautiful lake of Killarney.

In the gaiety of a continual round of visiting and receiving of company, Laura had not the leisure, any more than the inclination, to doubt the continuance of such gay prospects. In the enjoyment of the present all thought of the future was lost: she and her equally thoughtless partner dashed away in the highest style of elegance; nor ever

dreamt of bounding their expenses to the real limits of their income. Wholly occupied in the indulgence of her vanity and love of dissipation, lady O'Neal was insensible to the loss she had sustained in being deprived of the society of her aunt and sister: inconsiderate and selfish, she no longer regretted the pain she had occasioned them by this separation, and scarcely expressed a wish to see them again.

When sir Carroll O'Neal and his lady returned to Ireland, the families acquainted with the young baronet received him and his lovely bride with every demonstration of friendship and hospitality, which the most sanguine expectations of either could hope for; and the beautiful lady O'Neal had the supreme delight, to find herself every where de-

clared the reigning belle. Proud of her beauty and the universal admiration she excited, the enraptured sir Carroll had neither the inclination nor prudence to set bounds to her extravagance. Himself associating with all his former dissipated companions, and still accompanied by his designing pretended friend Kinmore, sir Carroll and lady O'Neal were in a fair way to spend the ample fortune, which Mrs. Denningham had bestowed on her niece. In the generosity of her heart, and her over fondness for Laura, she had, to add to her dowry, sold her town house, and added the purchase-money to the sum formerly intended for her portion.

Our enthusiastic visionary did not then consider the injury she was doing her nephew and Julia: in being thus

profuse to lady O'Neal, she had left herself nothing now but the West-India property, which in itself was of such precarious value. Charles, it is true, was already provided for;—the Priory was, after the death of Mrs. Denningham, to devolve to him; added to this, he inherited what property his father had in Jamaica, which was not very considerable, owing to the heavy losses Mr. Denningham had met with a short time before his death. On account of this, Mrs. Denningham had engaged to provide for both of her nieces entirely; which promise, of course, left them quite dependent on her generosity, which neither of the orphans had the least reason to doubt, but of her prudence many were dubious. In this last instance of her misguided liberality, she had risked more than she ought for one

niece, while the other was yet unprovided for. Should her aunt by any chance expend her remaining property, Julia would find herself cast on an unfeeling world, a portionless orphan; and, brought up in all the indulgences of affluence, she would then be reduced to the absolute necessity of gaining her own subsistence.

Mrs. Denningham thought not of the possible consequences of her unbounded generosity to Laura: she still calculated upon the estate she possessed abroad, and had not the most distant idea she had been led into any injustice by her over-weening partiality for her favourite.

In parting with Laura, she seemed at first to have lost all that rendered life desirable; but her mind, versatile

alike either in youth or age, could not long dwell on the same idea; and however violent her grief was for the loss of her niece, a few months after the departure of Laura found Mrs. Denningham reconciled to her absence, and again engaged as much as usual in some novel pursuit. Castle upon castle was erected in her fertile imagination; and, having no more permanent foundation than many she had previously constructed, they too successively vanished, "and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, left not a wreck behind."

From the contemplation of these romances of a full-fraught fancy, our deluded visionary was called to the accomplishment of her former hopes respecting her nephew, who at length received the due notice from India, that

the appointment from which he had expected so much was at length secured to him; but it would be necessary Charles should immediately proceed to that country, to take the very lucrative situation thus provided for him by lord Elbury, the friend of the late Mr. Denningham.

"Well, Charles," said Mrs. Denningham to her nephew, on his reading her the letter from his noble patron, "I shall yet, I hope, live to see you a great Nabob." But, much to her surprise, Charles did not appear so sanguine as herself in these high expectations; or his hopes were damped by the conviction that he must so soon quit England, and in it all his hopes of happiness,—a happiness which not all the riches of the East could compensate for the loss of.

He would sustain an irreparable loss if deprived of his beloved Jane, which, in his estimation, no wealth, no aggrandisement could make amends for. With Jane Mordaunt, Charles Denningham felt he could prefer the most humble cottage to all the magnificence of a palace:—"what were wealth, rank, and even princely power, if not shared with her he loved?"

Thus reasoned the young impassioned lover. Can it be surprising, then, that he should not enter so warmly into the views of his aunt as she expected? Whilst her ardent imagination was flying over the vast continent of Asia, the most distant regions of the East, his had wandered to the beloved precincts of Mrs. Mordaunt's lonely mansion:—with the modest unassuming Jane his

fancy dwelt with fond delight, as he recalled the happy hours he there had passed, blessed with the society of her he loved:—and now, just when the hope that he should one day call her his own had first dawned in his youthful breast, now to be called on to resign her,—to quit even the hope of ever beholding her again, was almost more than his fortitude could bear.

To one so young, so impassioned, the trial was most severe; but it must be borne: he had no actual possessions of his own, whatever his future expectations might be. And so affectionate and dutiful was Charles in his estimation of the regard due to his aunt, that never for a moment would he allow himself to anticipate her death, by dwelling upon

the certainty he then had of inheriting her landed property in England. The small sum he could call his own was not sufficient to enable him to marry; and even the remittances due to him and his aunt had not been paid for the last two or three years, so extremely uncertain were the emoluments then derivable from West-India property. In this state of affairs, it would be folly almost to madness to give up the lucrative appointment now offered him, and for which he had been educated.

Thus torn by the contending emotions of prudence and affection, he knew not what to decide on for some time; till at length, after much debate with himself, he came to the resolution to make known his difficulties to Mrs. Den-

ningham, who had ever been to him the kindest and most disinterested friend. She had in a manner sanctioned his affection for Jane, for whom she had frequently expressed herself as greatly interested, both on her account and that of her worthy parent. She must have observed his attachment to that amiable girl, thought Charles; and she had not once attempted to dissuade him from making her his companion for life. Vanity had of late whispered the youth, or the quick eye of love had discerned, that Jane was not wholly indifferent to his addresses.

During the whole of the past summer, which had been spent at Westcombe by the Denninghams, the inhabitants of the Priory and the cottage seemed to have

formed but one family, so frequently were they together. Jane was the inseparable companion of Julia in all the different excursions and parties formed for the amusement of her and Charles, during his stay in the country; and at each of these frequent interviews, Jane had gained in the admiration and esteem of Charles, till, insensibly to each party, friendship heightened into affection a preference for each other, which afterwards not even time or absence was suffered to change.

This attachment had not passed unnoticed by Mrs. Denningham or the mother of Jane. Mrs. Mordaunt had lately alluded to it, when conversing with her friend on confidential subjects: she then reminded Mrs. Denningham of her

daughter's want of fortune, for she could herself leave her a very small pittance, barely enough to subsist on; and unless an old relation of hers should leave her any of his immense riches, this was all her child had to expect for the future.

Mrs. Denningham, ever noble-minded and generous in the extreme, declared, that if this were the only obstacle, it should not prevent the union of her nephew and Jane: though as she and Charles were yet so young, nothing should be said to them on this subject; at the expiration of the next year, when the latter would be of age, the young people should have her consent, and she would do all in her power to add to their small fortune.

Of this liberal determination Charles was yet quite ignorant; though on his owning to her the real motive for his wish to remain in England, he was not greatly astonished to find she was already mistress of the important secret.

Mrs. Denningham owned, that her plans for his aggrandisement had, for a moment, banished all thought of Jane from her mind. "But I may be excused, I hope, as I am no *lover* of the young lady, though her sincere *friend*," said his aunt; "and you have my full permission, to make known your sentiments to Jane herself, and hear what she has to say on this subject."

"And not leave England!" said Charles, his fine eyes beaming with joy.

"Unless you can prevail on Mrs. Mordaunt to let you take her daughter with you to India," replied his aunt; "that is what I am thinking of. You and Jane are young, it is true; but I think I can rely upon the prudence of you both," said she, affectionately; "so go and make what fine speeches you can to win the mother and daughter."

Charles lost not a moment in any farther debate, but hastened to the cottage, and finding Jane alone, he proceeded to disclose to her his hopes of future happiness, if she would consent to be his.

Jane Mordaunt, with the natural candour of her disposition, did not wholly discourage his professions; but owned that, if her mother would give her consent, she should prefer him to every

other lover, who had yet sought to win her affections.

But Charles had not then explained how peculiarly he was circumstanced, —that he must either bear her from her beloved parent (now fast sinking to decay), or he must renounce for her the hopes of his family, by giving up the appointment in India. In his earnestness to secure the acceptance of Jane, he had omitted to recur to this very important point; but when he afterwards explained his sanguine hopes to the mother of Jane, and besought her consent to their union, this became an insuperable bar to his happiness.

Mrs. Mordaunt deemed it most imprudent for him to think of taking a young wife to India, before he had

established himself there, and had ensured a provision for himself and her. She again stated the trifle her daughter would receive of her, which, with his income, would be barely sufficient in England to support them according to his rank; that much could not yet be expected of his aunt, who had Julia to provide for out of her foreign property.

"But, in India, I shall have an ample provision," said Charles; "more than sufficient for our expenses. I shall be of age in a few months, and then I shall have at least sufficient to begin with; that will support us till I have been long enough abroad, to obtain emolument from my appointment there."

"Dear Denningham, you calculate like a novice in the world; you take

only the fair side of the question," said Mrs. Mordaunt. "Not that I wish to cast a gloom over your brilliant prospects: wait a few years, you are both young; rely upon my assurance, that it will be greatly to your advantage hereafter, however painful it may be at present to be separated for so long a period. But from experience, bitter experience," said she, "I know more of the world than you do. You are not certain, that the climate of India will agree with you: how could you, in case it did not, keep your situation there? or what would become of my child, if she were to lose you? Left utterly destitute, perhaps too with a young family, left wholly unprovided with the means of supporting them; think what would be her misery. Oh! Charles, I have suffered this bitter anguish, I have felt it all! and can I

wilfully place my own child, my beloved Jane, in such extremity of wretchedness? I cannot, much as I esteem you, I cannot consent to your becoming the husband of Jane. If I had the fortune I once was likely to possess,—had I the means of establishing you in life, Heaven be my witness, I would gladly promote your happiness; but as it is, I must refuse to sanction your hopes."

Charles, affected by the impressive manner with which Mrs. Mordaunt had pronounced his doom, could not for some moments resume the argument. It was in vain (on being about to return home) that he again pleaded his cause with all the eloquence that love inspired: Mrs. Mordaunt was firm in her refusal. All that he could obtain favourable to his wishes was, that after three years,

when Jane should be of age and able to judge for herself, if she then consented to accept him, no objection should be raised on her part.

This slender hope was all the anxious lover could gain to beguile his present misery. All his gay visions were in an instant vanished; three years of painful suspense he had yet to endure: in so long a space of time, as it then appeared, what changes might not take place! Jane might, forgetting his unalterable attachment, suffer her affections to be engaged by another in his absence; many rivals might endeavour to supplant him: what would life then be to him, when once deprived of her he so devotedly loved?

Slowly retracing his way to the Priory

in melancholy reflection, he was met by his aunt in the park, at no great distance from the house. Perceiving by the visible dejection of her nephew, that he had been unsuccessful in his mission, she would not at first lead to the subject which had evidently caused him so much disquiet. Addressing him with more than even her accustomed affection, she began to converse with him on some indifferent topic; but Charles, not heeding her remark, began to relate all that had passed in his interview with Mrs. Mordaunt: his mind was at that moment too much absorbed by grief and disappointment, to allow one other thought to engage his attention.

Mrs. Denningham was not less surprised than her nephew, at the positive refusal of her friend; but, upon reflec-

tion, she could not but allow her arguments were just, though she herself had not had foresight enough to perceive the imprudence of what she had been induced to sanction with her consent. Knowing that, from the firmness of Mrs. Mordaunt's decision, it would be vain to plead the cause of her nephew, she endeavoured to encourage him with the prospects he had yet in store for the future.

Julia participated in the grief of her brother, and sought, by all the little devices which sisterly affection could dictate, to assure him he had nothing to fear as to his influence over the heart of Jane Mordaunt. "She knew," she said, "that no time, no absence would ever diminish her affection for him: that Jane's was not a heart likely to be

changed by circumstances; and she had herself been too long in the confidence of that beloved friend, to doubt the constancy of her disposition."

These well-meant endeavours to console were not wholly lost on Charles: he again sought an interview with Jane; and though he heard her full determination to abide by the opinion of her mother, yet he derived the greatest consolation from her assurances, that she would not retract the consent to become his, when she could do so with the entire approbation of that beloved parent.

I must pass over the short interval between the time now mentioned, and that of Charles's departure from his native country.

The final farewell was a most distressing event to all parties, but to none more so than to Jane Mordaunt. Her heart ached, as she dwelt on the dangers he was about to encounter; but for his sake she endeavoured to subdue her grief, and assume a composure she could not feel. Beside her mother and Mrs. Denningham, Julia, the affectionate companion of her childhood, now alone remained to soothe her affliction, and to cheer the loneliness of her present situation.

The inhabitants of the Priory and the cottage all bore an air of mournful dejection for some days after the departure of Charles Denningham: but when time had lessened the first poignancy of their grief, Mrs. Denningham amused them with the hopes she im-

parted of his speedy return, and her various plans for the happiness of all parties. By this amiable condescension she enlivened her little domestic circle, and more firmly attached them, particularly the Mordaunts, to herself and family.

Julia and her young friend, (with the facility of youth ever prone to view their future prospects in the fairest light,) encouraged by the vivacity of Mrs. Mordaunt and Mrs. Denningham, soon resumed their former pursuits and amusements with all their wonted alacrity; and, in the society of each other, they no longer indulged in vain repinings at those evils they were unable to prevent.

In less time than could have been

expected, from the length of the voyage, they received the pleasing intelligence of Charles Denningham's arrival in India. This, as may be imagined, gave renewed spirits to the whole family at Westcombe. Charles was in good health when he wrote, and appeared much gratified at the reception he met with from lord Elbury, who treated him with marked attention and kindness, as the only son of his dearest friend, and, as such, had introduced his *protégé* to several families of distinction. Charles, in his letter assured Jane, that he wanted nothing to make him quite happy, but the society of those dearer friends he had left in England.

CHAPTER IX.

During the last year, since the marriage of Laura, Mrs. Denningham had received but few visitors at the Priory, except Mr. Morland occasionally, and the Mordaunts; the Alvingtons she had renounced all acquaintance with of late. Since her nephew had come of age, she had been convinced of the injustice and want of principle, visible in the conduct of sir George towards his ward. Probably he would have been more alive to the interest of Charles Denningham, had he judged it likely he would become his own son-in-law: this hope being frustrated, he had neither

the inclination nor the leisure to superintend the management of the small property which belonged to that young man; and, entirely owing to his neglect, a great part of what was due in arrears remained unpaid, when it was his duty, as the guardian to Charles, to insist on its payment. But, wholly engrossed by his own pursuits, sir George Alvington cared but little for the welfare of the son of his former friend, the late Mr. Denningham.

The Miss Alvingtons, piqued at the indifference of Charles, and mortified at the preference he had given to Miss Mordaunt, notwithstanding their superior beauty and accomplishments, revenged themselves for the slight, by ridiculing him and his aunt in every family in town they were acquainted

with. They asserted, that the former had wished much to ingratiate himself into their favour; but that their father would not hear of either of them accepting Charles Denningham, when they could any day marry so much more to their advantage; "for what was he? he was only the son of a West India planter!"

From the time that Mrs. Denningham had been deprived of the society of her favourite Laura, she had unconsciously become more attached to Julia. Encouraged by this change, Julia became more animated, more anxious to excel in whatever she knew would be most pleasing to her aunt. The comfort this affectionate conduct imparted, counterbalanced, in part, the affliction that amiable woman was doomed to suffer

from the ingratitude and folly of her eldest niece; whose behaviour was the very reverse of all it ought to have been to one so kind and generous, as Mrs. Denningham had ever proved herself to the unthinking self-willed lady O'Neal. On the marriage of her niece, a liberal portion had been bestowed on her; but this, with the broken fortune of sir Carroll, was not sufficient to support the establishment with which they had begun. This Mrs. Denningham had represented to Laura, who, haughty and impatient of control, and now considering herself at full liberty to act as she pleased, despised her proposals of retrenchment, and rejected her friendly advice, although given in the mildest and most affectionate manner; and our poor visionary found herself most severely disappointed in her sanguine ex-

pectations of her darling niece. The ingratitude and utter indifference of Laura pierced her to the heart; and bitterly she lamented her own folly, in having, by her blind indulgence, and fondness almost to adoration, laid the foundation of those vices, which showed themselves in the disposition of the cold-hearted, selfish lady O'Neal; once the idol of her hopes, and the object of her pride.

Before the first three years had elapsed since the marriage of lady O'Neal, she and sir Carroll had expended the whole of the sum that had been paid by Mrs. Denningham. Laura wrote to her aunt, and represented their distress, urging her to assist sir Carroll; for in case of this being denied, they

should be obliged to sell their house in Dublin; which, she declared, would make her the most miserable of human beings: and this must be the case, if a certain sum of money, which he had lost at the gaming table, could not be paid by other means. She entreated Mrs. Denningham would advance the sum required, which should be punctually repaid in a few months at farthest.

The indulgent aunt, unwilling to chagrin her niece by a refusal, immediately lent her all the ready money she could spare, which was more than sufficient to clear the debt, which had been so imprudently incurred by sir Carroll. She at the same time warned lady O'Neal, that this was the last money

they must hope to receive of her; that the remainder of her property she must reserve for Julia and her brother.

Lady O'Neal had not once expressed a wish to see either her aunt or sister at her own house, during her long absence from England: she knew, she said, the dislike her aunt had to take any excursion by sea, however short the distance. This was one excuse she pleaded for her neglect; and she readily availed herself of it, for not asking Mrs. Denningham to visit her and sir Carroll in Dublin. But, in fact, she did not really wish for the company either of her aunt or sister: too cold-hearted to feel grateful for the unbounded affection of Mrs. Denningham, she only feared her interference, and that, should she take the resolution to visit them in Ire-

land, she would not approve of the manner in which they lived, so much beyond their real income. Another still more powerful reason had Laura for not wishing to see her relations; and this was, that the increased beauty of her sister excited her envy: she feared Julia would rival her in the estimation of the *beau monde* of Dublin.

Lady O'Neal had been once in England since her marriage, and could not but remark the rapid improvement in the person and manners of her sister; whilst her own beauty was fast fading away, in consequence of the dissipated life she had led amid the thoughtless votaries of fashion.

Julia, now eighteen, was an uncommonly interesting girl; more lovely, in

the estimation of many, than her sister had been, even at the same age, when in the zenith of her beauty. Julia's was a more amiable turn of expression: the benevolence of her heart shone in the soft lustre of her mild blue eyes, while the smile of innocent gaiety gave animation to her lovely countenance. Perfectly unaffected, she seemed unconscious of her own superior power of pleasing, while it was her study to oblige: her winning address gained her many sincere friends; among whom none were more sincerely so than the Mordaunts, who still continued to reside near the Priory.

Jane had ever shared the confidence of Julia; and Mrs. Mordaunt was considered by her more as a parent than a mere acquaintance.

During the last three years, Julia had, from the increased kindness of her aunt, which had encouraged her assiduity, become equally skilled in all superficial accomplishments with her sister; and in all essential acquirements, owing to the tuition of Mrs. Mordaunt, she far surpassed Laura. Her beauty was more attractive, and failed not to excite the admiration of many; while her good sense and affability prevented her exciting that envy and ill-will, which the pride and arrogant conceit of Laura had frequently incurred.

Julia was now all that her fond aunt could wish her. The alteration in the manners, and the great improvement of personal beauty in her sister, were perceived with surprise and vexation by lady O'Neal, when she returned to Eng-

land for a short time: she could scarcely believe, that the "dull, spiritless Julia," who never had a word to say for herself, should now be transformed into the elegant, lively girl she then beheld her.

But the haughty Laura did not stay to consider, that her own ill treatment of her sister had formerly repressed her spirits, and checked her wish to please.

"Really, aunt, you put Julia too forward; such a chit as she is, a mere child!" said lady O'Neal, with her accustomed *hauteur*.

"Child as she is, she is now the same age you were, Laura, when you chose to act for yourself, against my more experienced judgment," replied Mrs.

Denningham, with more than her usual sedateness of manner when addressing her favourite.

Lady O'Neal felt the retort: she knew, even more than she chose to own, how much she had been to blame, and how certain she was of suffering for all her former self-willed perverseness.

Lady O'Neal had become a mother; but her helpless infant, from its being left entirely to the care of servants, fell a victim to the negligence of its unnatural parent; who, deaf to the voice of nature, had abandoned it to strangers, while *she*, hurried on by the love of dissipation, sought her own gratification alone, unmindful of the sufferings of her deserted babe.

Mrs. Denningham had hoped, that time would steady the giddy thoughtless Laura: but as the heart was bad, this was a vain hope; unless some unexpected and severe trial, of greater magnitude than she had hitherto experienced, should force reflection and repentance on her niece. Lady O'Neal was yet young, it might be argued in her behalf; but she had not a mind open to conviction, or a heart capable of feeling.

Mrs. Denningham, as was natural, still hoped the best; but had it not been for the soothing kindness of Julia, she would probably have sunk under the neglect and ingratitude of lady O'Neal.

Charles, her other favourite, was far distant; Julia alone remained to comfort

and support her declining life. Pecuniary difficulties pressed hard upon her: she had again remitted another sum of money to the O'Neals; and, at length, found herself under the necessity of selling part of her property abroad, from which she had of late years received but trifling sums of her agent. She had been under the painful obligation of lessening her charitable donations to the poor for the last year, and of setting bounds to her own family expenditure. She knew this intelligence would grieve her nephew, should he be informed of her embarrassments; and he would undoubtedly blame her for continuing to supply Laura with the money she wanted for herself and Julia. She had, therefore, cautioned her niece not to mention this circumstance in her letters to her brother; and the same injunction

was extended to Jane Mordaunt; as it would only add to his anxiety, and it was not in his power to serve them essentially. Neither would Mrs. Denningham have consented to take any part of the small property he possessed, which, even with what he could yet have saved since his residence in India, must be but inconsiderable.

She had been herself ever too liberal, even to profusion, to lay by any part of the rents of the Priory estates; and now, from the failure of her foreign payments, and the sums she remitted continually to Ireland, she found herself reduced to comparative poverty. With her usual activity of mind, she set about planning some method, to extricate herself from the present difficulty.

"I have a great mind to let the Priory for a year or two," said she to Mrs. Mordaunt, when conversing alone with her on what would be the best plan to adopt:—"it is in vain to continue here; I shall only involve myself, and injure that dear child Julia, whom I have already too much wronged."

"It will be a severe trial," said her friend: "I would have you consider well of it, before you resolve to leave Westcombe; though if Mr. Morland advises it, I think I would let the Priory, till something can be settled about the West India property."

"But suppose I were to take a trip to Jamaica myself," said Mrs. Denningham, "instead of sending, which I am inclined to think the best way of pro-

ceeding; would you set this down as one of my romantic flights?"

"I most certainly should," replied Mrs. Mordaunt; "at your age it would be extremely imprudent. At all events, I would not think of such a hazardous expedition, unless absolutely necessary."

The entrance of Julia here interrupted the conference; and Mrs. Denningham, anxious to know how her niece would bear the idea of quitting the Priory, began to question her on the subject, half jestingly and half in earnest; but she said not a word of her more recent intention, of going herself to the West Indies.

Just as she had begun her cautious inquiries into the state of Julia's feel-

ings on the proposed departure from Westcombe, she received a letter from lady O'Neal. "I am glad you have heard from Laura," said Julia; "I began to fear I had offended my sister, for she has never answered my two last letters; yet if she did but know my heart, she would not doubt my affection. In her last letter to me, she said something which I did not clearly comprehend, of your laying by all your money for me. This I would on no account wish; the bare mention of it hurt me exceedingly. I hope I shall never be the means of checking your liberality to my sister: I could never be happy, and know that she was in distress. Sir Carroll is much to blame, more so than poor Laura; it would be cruel to let her suffer for his extravagance," said the amiable girl, with tears in her eyes.

"I have done the utmost in my power for her; I can do no more. I have no property in England except this estate of the Priory, and that is so willed that it cannot be sold: the most I can do, is to let it, and live with you, my love, in a cottage: do you think you could reconcile your mind to this plan, Julia, in case nothing else can be done for us abroad?" said Mrs. Denningham, wishing to try how her niece would bear this diminution of their prospects.

"Dear aunt," said Julia, "I should be happy any where, however humble the dwelling, provided I was allowed to remain with you."

"My dearest child, I trust that we shall never be compelled to separate for

"How then shall we arrange respecting this same business?" inquired the old lady. "I have no trusty emissary; and something must be done, or I shall never receive the remittances due. I have no other resource left, for I have sent my last guinea to Laura; though, at the same time, I took care to let her know it would positively be the last she should receive of me."

"I need not remind you of my opinion, relative to this weak indulgence of lady O'Neal's thoughtless extravagance; remember it is not only yourself you are injuring, but that innocent and far better girl, your niece Julia," said Morland. "I will say no more on this point at present; but as to the West India business, why cannot you appoint another agent to manage your estates? he

may be more punctual in his payments."

"I think it would not be an easy matter to effect this. In the first place, I know no one whom I could confide in, any more than Danvers; and in the next, they all do as they please there: they know how difficult it is to obtain justice, even if they defraud me of my right. The best way will be for me to sell the estates, and either place the purchase-money in the funds here, or buy some place with it in England, which I can leave to Julia; which would be, in either case, more advantageous to her than foreign property, which must always be very precarious."

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sent, "without your quitting this country?"

"I fear I cannot confide sufficiently in the present agent, to depute him to sell the property," said Mrs. Denningham, who was secretly resolved to go herself to conclude the business. "I know he wishes to purchase it himself, but I should never get the money of him; for you know he has not yet paid the whole of the sum due to Charles, for that part of the estate he purchased of him on his coming of age."

"At all events, I again entreat," said Mrs. Mordaunt, "that you will not decide too hastily: I cannot endure to think of what you must suffer if you persist in going abroad, so much as you dislike a voyage; otherwise I will own, that you

have in part convinced me it would be to your advantage."

"My dear considerate friend, that is the hope which enables me to brave the inconvenience of so long a voyage; but even this evil is nothing, when compared with the advantage to be derived from my undertaking it: it is for my poor Julia I wish to go. How could I answer it to my conscience, after having brought that dear child up in expectation of a good fortune? how could I leave her utterly destitute, and not reproach myself for the great injury I had done the dear affectionate girl? No, I had rather endure any sufferings, any hardships, than leave her thus pennyless. If my next accounts are not more favourable, and Mr. Danvers does not appear likely to settle the business to

my satisfaction, I will this very next spring set out for the West Indies!"

Mrs. Mordaunt had in part been won over by the persuasive eloquence of Mrs. Denningham, to coincide with her in the opinion, that it would be best to sell her property abroad; as her own income would then be more certain, as well as that she designed for Julia; and, to effect this most advantageously to both, it might be advisable for her to go herself to Jamaica, and claim the possession of her estates out of the hands of the dishonest agent she had hitherto employed; though it was, she said, a hazardous undertaking, and it was with the utmost reluctance she was induced to sanction so wild a scheme with even a slight portion of approbation. But she saw her friend was more than com-

monly positive, and she was unwilling to irritate her feelings by continued opposition, which she saw too plainly would be unavailing.

Mr. Morland was not so easily silenced. He declared it was highly improper for an aged female, like her, to think of setting out, unprotected, on such a perilous expedition; and, if she persisted in going, it would be madly risking her life, in spite of the advice and warning of her best friends: she must thank her own imprudent folly for the probable consequences; but if, on the contrary, she would listen to reason, and remain in England, he would take care every thing should be done that legal means could adopt, to force Danvers to come to some explanation, satisfactory to all

parties; and the arrears due should be required of him by the assistance of the law.

Even this assurance, and the additional one, that the estate could be sold, if she wished it, without her being on the spot, failed in convincing her. She still persisted; and as nothing more could be urged, Mr. Morland, and her equally zealous friend, gave up the point, and left it entirely to her own decision. Satisfied they had remonstrated with all the earnestness of the most devoted friendship, the result must be left to herself.

To spare the feelings of Julia, nothing of this plan had been mentioned to her; it was judged best to keep her ignorant

of it, till more fully decided on by the next letter from Mr. Danvers.

The expected letter was at length received, with the intelligence, that one half year's remittance had been paid into the hands of Mrs. Denningham's banker; and a promise of a similar sum six months from the receipt of this last. Mr. Danvers excused his want of punctuality in his payments of late years, by the alleged failure of the crops, and the great number of slaves to be purchased, in consequence of the original number being lamentably diminished by a mortality, which had prevailed in the island. Immense numbers had been swept off by the prevalence of this dreadful disease.

"I have really, I think, been uncom-

monly harsh in my judgment; I have certainly wronged this man," said Mrs. Denningham. "It appears he has, after all, done the best he could for me; I am quite pleased with his letter, there appears so much candour in it. Here is an order, too, for the remainder of the sum due to Charles. Poor fellow, he will be quite rejoiced to hear this. Did you know, that he had given me directions to place it in the funds for his intended bride, in case he should not live to claim her?" said she to Mrs. Mordaunt.

"I never heard of his intention," replied her friend, "but he is ever kind and considerate. I shall think Jane the happiest of women, when she is the wife of one so amiable and disinterested. Dear good young man! it is my fondest hope, that I may live to see him the

husband of my beloved Jane: I should then die happy."

"Talk not of dying, I beseech you," said Mrs. Denningham, "for just now I am in such good spirits from this delightful news, that I feel quite young again. Old as we now both are, I hope we have yet many happy days in store: but I have not read the whole of my letter. What does Danvers say to my selling the estate?" said she, casting her eye again over the letter, and hastily perusing its contents.—"Oh! as I thought, neither more nor less than this, that I must set out for the West Indies this spring; for he positively declares, it will be absolutely necessary that I should be present, before he can treat with any one for the purchase of the property. There are, it seems, some

deeds which I must sign: so you see it is at once decided; and I must break the intelligence to Julia, as well as I can; but not a word of the affair to Charles till I come back. Jane must remember, that in her letters to her lover she may tell her own, but none of my secrets," said the old lady, with her usual playful good humour.

END OF VOL. I.

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CASTLES IN THE AIR;

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WHIMS OF MY AUNT.

CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Mordaunt, on perusing the letter from the agent, was of opinion that, by his statement of things, it appeared her presence would be indispensable, and she reluctantly acknowledged this to Mrs. Denningham; but Mr. Morland, though in part of the same belief, was unwilling that his friend should risk her personal safety by so hazardous an un-

dertaking. He strenuously advised her consulting some one, who could by legal measures secure to her the possession of her estate, free from all engagements with her present agent, the integrity of whose character she had every reason to doubt, however fair he might now seem in his professions.

Mrs. Denningham, for the first time, considered Morland's advice as contrary to her real interest, and that he was himself too pertinacious of his opinion. The fact to her appeared too clear to stand hesitating about; and go she would.

With this determination, she armed herself against the friendly admonition of her more prudent adviser; and nothing now remained to decide, but what

should become of Julia while she herself was absent.

This, too, the worthy Morland had considered, even before Mrs. Denningham had given it a thought. He foresaw the difficulties that lovely girl might be exposed to, when deprived of the protection of her aunt.

"I find you are determined on leaving us," said he; "and what you urge (that from being a native of that climate you are not so likely to suffer from it as if you had never resided on the island) may be just; and that your going to Jamaica will be the most satisfactory method of proceeding against Danvers is very *possible*, though, pardon me if I say, not probable. But what do

you mean to do with your niece? Where is poor Julia to be left, while you go on this Quixote-like expedition to fight your own battles with Danvers?"

"I cannot leave her at the Priory by herself, young as she is;—this plan would never do."

"I think not," said Morland, dryly, rather piqued at the obstinate determination of Mrs. Denningham to act exactly contrary to his advice and anxious wish for her welfare. He had taken the privilege of an old and tried friend, and had, perhaps, suffered his earnestness in her cause to hurry him into unusual warmth in the argument; and this was the least likely way to succeed with Mrs. Denningham.

"I was wishing to place her under the care of Mrs. Mordaunt," said she, "if she would do me the kindness to take charge of her in my absence. I should then feel no anxiety on her account: the dear child, I know, would be happy; and I shall not, I hope, be many months absent."

"I shall be most happy to receive her, and Jane will be delighted with the arrangement. I should have entreated you before to place her with me, but I did not know whether you might not prefer leaving her with one of her relations in town."

"Not one of them would treat her with the kindness I know you will. My dear girl will be far happier with you and Jane; and besides, I had much

rather leave her under your guidance," replied Mrs. Denningham.

All was now settled, except letting Julia know of her aunt's intended departure from England.

Julia, when first informed that her aunt was about to leave her, probably for many months at least, could scarcely credit what she heard; it seemed so highly improbable, that Mrs. Denningham should, at her advanced age, think seriously of undertaking so long a voyage: and still greater was her surprise, when told that Mrs. Mordaunt did not oppose this new plan, which appeared to our heroine the wildest and most ill-judged that could be devised.

"Dear aunt, is it possible, that Mrs.

Mordaunt and Jane can approve of your leaving England alone, and exposed to the dangers of a long voyage, without one of your family with you in case of illness, or the many evils you may have to encounter? Oh! rather let us leave the Priory, and live in the meanest cottage here, than thus risk your health and comfort.—Dear, dear aunt, you must not leave me: if you persist in going, I will accompany you; I will share your hardships, if I am to participate in the advantages of your exertions. But why for my sake should you still endeavour to enrich yourself? Have we not sufficient to support us here with economy?"

"My dear child, my plan is determined: it is absolutely necessary I should myself go to Jamaica; nothing will be

done unless I am present. I shall return in a few months; in the mean time you will be safe, and, I trust, happy, under the care of Mrs. Mordaunt, and in the society of your friend Jane. I shall take Lucy and old Dawson's nephew with me, as my attendants: they, I know, are attached to me, and will take the greatest care of me, should the fatigue impair my health; but this is not very likely, for I was never better in my life than I now am."

"And you really intend to leave us in less than a month!" said Julia, weeping bitterly, and affectionately embracing her aunt.

Unable, from the excess of her grief, to urge any more on the subject at that time, she sorrowfully sought Jane Mor-

daunt, to impart to her this new project of her aunt's, and to consult with her how to prevail on Mrs. Denningham to give it up as too hazardous and chimerical, at her advanced age. But here too, our poor heroine was disappointed, for Jane was already apprised of the whole plan; and as her mother had, however reluctantly, acknowledged that it was necessary, in order to recover sufficient of Mrs. Denningham's property, to enable her to live in tolerable affluence, she would not venture to dissuade her from the intended expedition, much as she lamented the anxiety it occasioned her companion Julia.

The old domestics at the Priory were now almost convinced, that "Madam, who had been always rather odd or so, (though an excellent mistress,) was not

quite right in her head;" and wondered that "Mrs. Mordaunt, who was a mighty steady good sort of woman, should allow her to act in such a wild crack-brained way, as to think of letting her cross the seas, and go into foreign parts, when, poor soul! she was no more fit to be trusted than a child: for all she was so good, and so mindful of the poor, it was plain she was a little crazed."

This, and such sort of gossip, frequently engaged the attention of the household at the Priory; and poor Dawson was so grieved to part with her old mistress, whom she had known from the time she was a child, that she was often obliged to resort to the remedy of her *cheering drops*, so frequent were her fits of despondency. The worthy creature was particularly attached to Mrs. Denning-

ham, as were most of her aged attendants, who had remained like fixtures in the mansion of Westcombe for the last thirty or forty years.

Dawson prided herself on having been the first to receive Mrs. Denningham, when she came from the West Indies; at which period she was a mere child, not above seven years of age; "just such another as miss Julia was at that age, the same little sweet-tempered creature; only she was more like miss Laura in the face."

All was now bustle and preparation at the Priory. Lucy and James were quite delighted with the idea of "going out to see the world;" but Mrs. Dawson would never have let them go out of England, but for her attachment to her

old mistress, so much did the idea of "crossing the seas" appal her. But, as she very justly remarked, "It would be a shocking thing to suffer madam to go to such a distance, old as she was, and not have one of her own people near her, in case any thing should happen, which God forbid there should!" ejaculated the good dame, with heartfelt sincerity.

On a fine spring morning, Mrs. Denningham, accompanied by Mrs. Mordaunt, her daughter, and Julia, set off for Bristol, at which port the former was to embark for the West Indies. She had already engaged a passage on board a vessel bound to Jamaica, which was expected to sail in a few days with the rest of the fleet; and it had been previously determined, that Julia and the

whole of the party should wait with Mrs. Denningham till they could see her safe on board. Mr. Morland had been prevented attending them as he had wished, having no friend near Westcombe who could supply his place, as village pastor, during his short absence from his flock.

The dreaded summons at length arrived;—the vessel had completed her cargo, and was already down the river as far as Kingroad, where she lay to take in the last of her passengers.

Unwilling to part with their beloved friend till the last sad moment, the whole party engaged a boat to take them with her to the vessel at the mouth of the river Avon.

Nothing could be more grand and beautiful than the cliffs to the right, as they proceeded from Bristol to Kingroad. The mist of early morning hung on the opposite woods, which magnificently clothed the shore even to the water's edge. The lofty hills, receding at intervals, presented the most romantic woody glens, over which the rugged brow of some rude crag frowned awfully wild, finely contrasted with the soft yet vivid green of the varied foliage around, mellowed by the red dusky brown of the larger forest trees, not yet bursting into leaf.

Innumerable boats passed and repassed with the different passengers, either just arrived from the vessels lately anchored in the roads, or hastening to get on board those which were waiting to sail.

In the countenances of the former, Julia fancied she could perceive the joy they felt in the hope of meeting their friends waiting their arrival in the port. But with the latter the feelings of Julia herself most assimilated: the downcast look, the tearful eyes of many of the younger passengers, plainly told they had lately heard that sadly mournful word, Farewell! from those they loved the dearest. The expression of recent grief was yet strongly depicted in their countenances, as they turned with aching hearts to take a last look at that home, they were then about to leave perhaps for ever.

The anxious gaze after the receding forms of those who had just left them, as they slowly retraced their way to the city,—the last token of friendly farewell

as it was given,—the last wave of the up-raised handkerchief as it fluttered in the breeze, was eagerly gazed at by the hapless mourners, as the tide rapidly bore them from their friends or relatives and native land.

Arrived at Pill, a village four miles from Bristol, just at the mouth of the river, these painful thoughts were, for a time, diverted by the rude hoarse vociferations of the pilots, and the uproar occasioned by the number of vessels waiting for the turn of the tide, to make their way up towards Bristol. From its being impossible to proceed up the river safely with a ship of any burden without a proper pilot, each captain or master of a vessel is anxious to engage one at Pill, that as little time as possible may be lost in waiting at anchor.

Our party, having cleared this bustling scene, proceeded rapidly on, and in a very short time entered Kingroad, where the fleet had waited for convoy, it being then a time of war.

Had not Julia from her infancy been accustomed to behold one of the grandest sea views, *that* which now presented itself to her eyes must have excited her particular admiration. To a stranger to such scenes it would have appeared singularly beautiful:—the whole of the fleet was already assembled;—the frigates fluttered their gay signals in the breeze;—all was in readiness: they waited but the signal for sailing.

Mrs. Denningham had lingered till the latest hour, before she had the resolution to leave her beloved niece and

amiable friends. There was not even time allowed for them to go on board with her.

Julia, with a beating heart and tearful eyes, saw her aunt ascend the ladder thrown over the ship's side for the passengers; and while they waited till Lucy and James had reached the deck, she eagerly embraced the opportunity of saying one more word to Mrs. Denningham. "Dear aunt, write often, pray write often," said the lovely girl, almost broken-hearted at this dreaded separation. She could say no more; her voice sunk into an inarticulate sob, as she turned to take one last look at her aunt, when the boat left the side of the vessel.

The tide being then against them,

they returned slowly towards Pill; and, before they had lost sight of the fleet, the expected signal was given. A frigate led the way,—the merchantmen hoisted their sails,—and, favoured with a fair breeze, glided majestically down the channel.

"And she is gone! My dear, kind aunt is really gone!" said Julia, as the sail was blended with the distant horizon. "Oh! Mrs. Mordaunt," added our heroine in unspeakable anguish, "shall I ever see my dear, dear aunt again?" Not even the soothing kindness of her friend Jane could at that moment lessen the weight of grief, which oppressed her heart, as she wept in all the bitterness of sorrowing despondence.

Mrs. Mordaunt compassionated the

sufferings of her young companion, but allowed her to sink undisturbed into that deep reverie of melancholy reflections, which will arise, spite of fortitude itself, when an affectionate heart is separated from the dearest object of its affection. No hopes, however pleasing,—no prospects, however brilliant, can entirely banish the unwelcome intruders from the youthful breast, keenly alive to the purest sentiments of nature unchecked by the cold suggestions of art.

It was in consideration of these feelings, that Mrs. Mordaunt forbore to urge Julia to exert her strength of mind to overcome the grief, that at that moment preyed on her heart. She knew by self-taught experience, that no reasoning, however just, will avail to soothe affliction in its first and bitterest an-

guish; and Julia was better left for a time to the indulgence of her silent speechless grief. Time would lessen the severity of a trial like hers; though to one as yet so untried in the school of adversity, the deprivation she was now called upon to endure appeared a calamity of no trivial nature.

CHAPTER II.

Previous to Mrs. Denningham's departure she had heard from Charles, and immediately answered his letter, but said not a word of her intention to leave England; and she forbade Julia or Jane Mordaunt to inform her nephew of her absence, when they should next write to him. Neither were they to make any mention of the late distress she had been in from the extravagance of Laura.

Mrs. Denningham had, before she proposed leaving Julia to the care of Mrs. Mordaunt, informed lady O'Neal

of her intention to proceed to Jamaica; and hinted a wish, that her sister should spend the next summer with her in Ireland, as she thought it would be more cheerful for Julia, and that Laura would be glad of the opportunity of seeing her. But this half request lady O'Neal had not noticed, and scarcely expressed any regret at the necessity there was of her aunt's encountering such difficulties.

This want of affection hurt Mrs. Denningham more than all the losses she had met with: the ingratitude of her favourite sunk deeper in her mind than she was willing to allow. Though Julia did not see her sister's letter, she guessed, by the dejection of her aunt, that all was not well: either it was another application for money, or the coldness of her manners had wounded the feel-

ings of Mrs. Denningham. She knew not the extent of her sister's unkindness: she was yet ignorant, that Laura had a heart capable of refusing an asylum in her house to herself, the only sister lady O'Neal had.

Mrs. Denningham was unwilling to increase the affliction of Julia, by disclosing the whole of her sister's unfeeling conduct; she had, therefore, purposely kept from Julia all knowledge of the proposal she had made.

On their return to Westcombe, Mrs. Mordaunt was agreeably surprised by a packet received from her son, containing some presents for herself, Jane, and his former playmate Julia; but what was still more acceptable to all was, the information that he should probably

visit them very shortly at the cottage, and perhaps continue at home for some months.

"Delightful!" exclaimed Jane Mordaunt; "we shall have him just at the right time, Julia: we wanted his company now to raise our drooping spirits. For several months! This is a pleasure I never expected again, he has so long been a truant from his home."

"Now if my aunt and Charles had been at home, what a happy party we might have been!" replied Julia; still dwelling on the melancholy idea, that all who were dearest to *her* were far, very far, distant from her.

"Oh! talk not of what we *might* have been, dearest Julia; I am determined

yet to see you more cheerful, more like yourself; I must impart a share of my happiness to you, or mine will not be complete. I have my share of anxiety too; but our dear Charles wrote last in such excellent spirits, that it has made me quite a different creature ever since I heard from him. One more year, and he will be with us again," said she, endeavouring by her own hilarity to recall the former playful vivacity of her friend, of her sister, as she more frequently called our heroine.

Mr. Morland, and a few of the families in the immediate neighbourhood, were all the visitors that were received at the cottage; but these were of late frequently invited by Mrs. Mordaunt, in order to make the time pass more cheerfully, and to enliven their little

domestic circle during the absence of Mrs. Denningham. Anxious to render her humble residence agreeable to Julia, she had, together with Jane, left no means untried to add to the comfort and amusement of their guest.

These attentions Julia felt and acknowledged with the liveliest emotions of grateful affection. She owned it was a duty incumbent on her to be contented, and as cheerful as circumstances would admit: yet many an anxious fear pervaded her mind, when left to meditation; and often the unbidden tear started to her eye, when she thought of her aunt or brother, and how great a space of time it might be before they should meet again.

As Jane Mordaunt and Julia were one

evening sitting at work, near the little casement that overlooked the garden, a gentleman approached, opened the low wicket that led to the cottage, and hastily passed the window: he knocked, the servant girl opened the door, and the stranger inquired if Mrs. or Miss Mordaunt were at home.

"Yes sir: would you please to walk in; mistress and the young ladies are all at home." Saying this, she stepped forward, and ushered the gentleman into the little parlour where the ladies were sitting, endeavouring to guess who this visitor might be.

"It is really like Henry's voice," said Jane, as the stranger made the inquiry after them; "but yet it cannot be he."

"It is, it is my own dear Henry!" exclaimed Mrs. Mordaunt, as the door opened, and he advanced hastily towards them. "Dear, dear Henry," was repeated by Jane, who, with her mother, were in a moment clasped to his bosom: it was indeed Henry Mordaunt, who had thus unexpectedly arrived at the cottage.

The time mentioned in his letter was not till a month later than the present period; which was the reason he had taken them by surprise in the manner related.

Julia had not at first been perceived by him, so delighted was the young sailor to see his beloved mother and sister. After this first joy was a little moderated, he became sensible, that

another, almost equally dear to him, was present, and who was scarcely less rejoiced than either Mrs. Mordaunt or Jane at his arrival.

"What, Julia! and I not see my dear little playmate Julia!" exclaimed Henry, on first perceiving her. "I ought to beg ten thousand pardons for this strange behaviour of mine; but sailors, you know, are never the most polished fellows in the world."

"Though allowed, at the same time, to be the most sincere," said Julia; "so for this time, since you have made all due apology, I will pardon this offence of yours."

"Then you must consent to let me sign the treaty of peace on your lips, or

it will avail me nothing," said he; and taking the privilege of an old acquaintance, he kissed her blushing cheek. "We are, you know, old friends; do you remember when I used to make boats for you and Laura to sail in the fish-pond near the Priory?"

"Ah! those were happy days," said Julia: "my aunt, and Laura, and dear Charles were with me then; but, Henry, you will find the Priory quite deserted now."

"How deserted? what do you mean? is not Mrs. Denningham at the Priory? I know Charles is in India, and Laura is married, but did you say your aunt is absent?" said Henry, in great surprise, for he had not yet heard of the reason of Mrs. Denningham's absence; but

when informed of this, and the place of her destination, he could well account for the evident dejection of Julia when she had alluded to her aunt. He good-naturedly rallied her on her fears, which he wished to convince her were wholly groundless; and so far succeeded, as to make her half convinced of the truth she so much wished to believe, and that, in fact, her fears had magnified the danger of the voyage.

In better spirits she listened to the narrative of the young sailor's adventures since he left Westcombe; while his fond mother, naturally proud of her son's noble disposition and excellent talents, looked upon him with all the tender love of an affectionate parent, imagining that few were blest with such an amiable and dutiful child. The sight of

him had produced such a change in her spirits, that Jane and Julia felt more happy than they could express. The first day or two after Henry's return, Mrs. Mordaunt seemed, to the joy of all the family, to amend greatly in health; her former vivacity enlivened their domestic circle, and the little family party at the cottage were, for a time, one of the happiest that can be imagined. The young people in the neighbourhood, delighted with the frank but polished manners of the young lieutenant; seemed to vie with each other in showing him every attention their hospitality could dictate.

The summer being uncommonly fine, their amusements were delightfully varied; at times little *fêtes champêtres*, were given by Mrs. Mordaunt at the

cottage, or in the grounds belonging to the Priory, in honour of her son's return, at which their neighbours were invited.

At other times, parties were formed to dine on the sands, a few miles down the coast; which is a favourite excursion to many of the strangers, who have resorted of late years to Combe and its vicinity for the benefit of sea-bathing.

These, and gipsy rambles in the woody glens, afforded continual variety to the amusements of the young people, but in which Mrs. Mordaunt could seldom join, from her extremely delicate health; and in any excursions by sea she scarcely ever was one of the party, from her timidity, and particular dislike to being on the water. But this uncon-

querable aversion of hers she would by no means allow to be any restriction to her more fearless and youthful companions; and as she was, from her weak health, frequently glad of a little leisure, she satisfied them with the assurance, that she should be more contented at home; provided they would be careful to watch the state of the tide, which comes in very rapidly, and with great violence, along that rocky coast. For want of this precaution, Mrs. Mordaunt had, with a whole party of gentlemen and ladies from the Priory, been nearly lost; and this it was which had so much increased her natural timidity, on any proposed excursion by sea. This circumstance had happened soon after she came to live at Westcombe, too long since for either Julia or Jane Mordaunt to remember; and even had it been in

their remembrance, this would not have deterred them from readily joining in the delightful party they had planned. Henry promised, (as the best sailor among the young men who were to accompany them,) to take every precaution for the safety of all; and, satisfied with this assurance, his mother saw them depart with more confidence, than she would otherwise have done. The day passed happily away without any disaster; and this emboldened the young people to repeat the amusement several times during the summer. Probably thrown off their guard by their apparent security, they ventured to remain on the sands one evening longer than usual, unwilling to quit so delightful a scene; all present were engaged in the dance, and heeded not the still more rapid movement of the foot of time. Jocund

the hours passed, as they tripped away "on the light fantastic toe." The boatman and his boy lay sleeping beneath the jutting crag of the cliff, near which the party had dined; the boat lay moored near the shore, and the better to enjoy the freshness of the evening breeze, Julia had proposed to extend their ramble to a long point of land, or rather sand-bank, which ran out a considerable way into the sea, and was much elevated from the part of the shore they had left.

"What a delightful place for a dance!" said one of the company.

"I should like it of all things," said Julia; "it is so delightfully smooth here on the level sand, and the air is so cool and refreshing from the sea, that I think

the exercise would not fatigue here so much as under the rock. What say you Jane? shall you like it?"

"O, of all things; I delight in a dance in the open air," replied Jane.

"Agreed, then, and Julia is to be my partner: she promised she would last evening; so I now beg the honour of her fair hand, as her devoted and most humble knight," said Henry, with mock-heroic gallantry.

"Not very humble either," retorted his sister, "thus peremptorily to state your claims before you ask the boon."

"Julia will excuse the blunt manners, which, as a sailor, I have contracted: if she knew my heart, she would know I

am more truly, *humbly* hers, than half those more flattering, sighing swains, you, Jane, think I ought to take for an example."

"I think you are very well as you are," said Jane, playfully; "only I should think you still better, if you would go and wake that sleeping urchin yonder, and the Adonis who reclines so gracefully by him. Bid them watch the state of the tide while we are dancing; for I have some of my dear mother's fears on me, when I find myself at any distance from the shore, particularly on such a frail footing as this," pointing to the sand bank on which they stood.

Henry hastened to obey her, but first declared she might consider herself as safe as if on board a seventy-four. He

laughed off what he termed her childish fears; and summoning the rustic musician, who had attended them in this excursion, he led Julia to the party, who had ranged themselves in readiness to begin the dance. The smiles of hilarity now beamed on every countenance, and brightened every eye of the happy group thus assembled.

Dance after dance succeeded, and, careless of their danger, none thought of the threatened evil; or once looked towards the rapidly encroaching flood, which had already rolled its dashing waves far in upon the shore. A few moments longer, and the bank of sand would, from a high far-spreading promontory, be transformed into an insulated narrow slip, just above the surface of the heaving billows.

A shriek of terror from the sleeping boy first gave the alarm; the dance ceased, all looked anxiously around, and, to the horror and unspeakable anguish of the late festive throng, they beheld the snowy crest of a tremendous breaker, as it hurled its foaming spray over the crag that had hitherto sheltered the helpless boy, as he lay unconscious of the approaching danger: his shriek it was, which had struck such a panic on the whole party.

The man who had been set to watch had proved faithless to his trust, and, overcome with fatigue, or the share of the good things which had fallen to his lot after the rest had dined, he fell into so profound a sleep, that nothing could have roused him from it but the repeated outcries of the boy, who now, starting

up, perceived the dreaded evil was at hand: the waters had already intercepted all return to the beach, where the boat, their only hope of refuge, lay moored among the rocks.

The sands appeared to the terrified victims already to sink beneath their feet, and to imbibe the flood, that was so soon to roll its silver tide over their polished surface, as it glittered in the declining rays of the setting sun.

Stupified with fear, some of the spectators stood in mute anguish, surveying the distant cliff, the well known cave; and clasping their hands upraised to heaven, secretly implored the assistance of the Almighty, to rescue them from the yawning gulf of destruction, which every where presented itself. Others, by

their shrieks and unavailing lamentations, seemed by their loud clamour to hope some friend on shore could hear their cries, and hasten to their relief.

Some of the young men were for trying to swim to the shore, and thus effect their own escape; others, unwilling to go unless they could likewise bear with them their female relatives, yet lingered irresolute; while the wretched, helpless, and weeping objects of their solicitude clung around them imploring their assistance.

Suddenly all hearts were cheered from this dreadful state of agonising fear, by the joyful exclamation of the boy who stood on the highest point of the bank towards the shore. Henry had, with the promptitude and daring of a British

sailor, swam to that part of the shore where the boat was moored, and had succeeded in bringing it off. He was rapidly working his way back towards the bank; and hope again animated every bosom, as he proceeded onwards, stemming with all his might, the violence of the current.

The boatman and the boy, from not being able to swim, could not render any assistance in this distressing dilemma; and thus situated, had it not been for the timely exertions of Henry Mordaunt, nearly the whole of the party must inevitably have perished.

The boat could not, at any part of this dangerous bank, be brought near enough for the females to get into it; and so soft and yielding was it to the

pressure of the feet, that it was impossible to go very near the edge by the water, without running the risk of sinking in the sand.

Some of the most venturous at length succeeded, and pulling the boat in as near as was consistent with safety; they waded, knee deep, through the water, bearing each some one of their female friends on board, till all were rescued from the peril which menaced them. Henry had set the example, and, on gaining the bank, lost not in delibeberation the precious moments which yet remained; but clasping the almost lifeless form of Julia in his arms, he bore her the first from the scene of consternation and dismay. In a moment after, Jane was rescued by him in the same undaunted manner, while his com-

panions imitated his laudable exertions, and saved the rest of the females at the imminent risk of their lives. For with the added burden each struggled to save, the sands sunk beneath their feet, and rendered it no easy task to extricate themselves, from the trembling mass they had to cross before they could reach the fragile bark, that was to be their means of deliverance.

Once more on the surer footing of the stony beach, they looked back and shuddered at the contemplation of the danger they had so providentially escaped; and then with heartfelt gratitude blessed that merciful hand, which had saved them from the horrors of an untimely death.

Scarcely had they for a moment gazed

on the spot they had so recently left, when the last point of the bank, which, till now, had remained above water, was no longer visible; and all was sunk beneath the ingulfing waves, as they rolled on in unchecked fury towards the shore.

Spent with fatigue, and spiritless from their recent terror, the party returned to the welcome shelter of their separate homes; all eager to relate their own hair-breadth escapes and many perils.

Mrs. Mordaunt had, for the last hour, been anxiously waiting their return; and began to be seriously alarmed at the lateness of the hour, and the continued absence of the young people, so much beyond the time they had named on setting out on this ill-fated excursion.

In tenderness to his mother, Henry endeavoured to make light of the danger they had encountered; but enough was told to alarm Mrs. Mordaunt, who, from having already experienced a similar disaster, was tremblingly alive to the conviction of the evil, which had menaced the lives of all who were dear to her. And nothing could pacify her fears for the future, but a promise never again to venture on the bank, which had so nearly proved their grave.

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the affectionate girl to know the contents of the letter.

An exclamation of delight, and an expression of joy beaming in her intelligent eyes, told plainly that all was as she wished, and that Mrs. Denningham was safe.

"Well, my love, what news?" inquired Mrs. Mordaunt: "but I see I need not ask if your aunt is safe; I see by your countenance she is."

"And you need not have a more intelligent index to peruse," observed Henry: "it is the index to a mind I should be happy to study," said he, gazing with admiration on the animated countenance of Julia, as, with a look which told the feelings of her heart,

she presented the letter to Mrs. Mordaunt.

"Young man, is it the fair index or the book itself you are now studying?" inquired Mr. Morland, who had accompanied his young friend to the cottage.

"Both," rejoined Henry: "it is impossible to study the one without reading the other."

Julia, who had been too much engaged to overhear this discourse, was now about to seek Jane, to relate the good news to her; when Mr. Morland thus addressed her: "You have really lost some of the finest speeches in the world: would you believe it? you have wrought almost a miracle, and made

even a sailor learn to pay compliments," said he, with pretended gravity.

"Then it was a compliment from the heart, Julia will at least allow me," said Henry; "for she herself owned that sailors were the most sincere: did you not, Julia?"

Julia was aware of the truth of his argument, and blushed when she called to mind that this had been her own expression, the first evening Henry arrived at Westcombe.

"Whatever compliments Henry may be pleased to pay me," said she with some embarrassment, "I find *I* must be more careful how I compliment; since he has the vanity to remember

and repeat whatever I may have said in his favour, or that of his profession."

"Very true, you cannot be too careful, my sweet girl," said Morland; "these young fellows have abundance of vanity. But what of your aunt? has she seen that villanous Danvers? I am certain he has wronged her to a considerable amount, within the last ten or dozen years: I hope she has made him give up his accounts."

"My aunt seems to have a more favourable opinion of him than I could have imagined, after his neglectful conduct: she says he has nearly concluded the purchase of the estate on the most advantageous terms, for which he is to pay her before she leaves the island."

She is in excellent health, and hopes to return with the next fleet to England. I am heartily glad she has disposed of the property abroad; it has, of late, caused her continual anxiety and disappointment."

"I had rather she had sold it to any one than Danvers, I am convinced he will over-reach her if he can; but I am glad Mrs. Denningham has stipulated to have the purchase money paid down immediately," said Morland: "but, my dear, I am detaining you from Jane; I forgot you had not yet told her the good news: I suppose she is engaged in preparing for this gipsy ramble of yours; but no more dancing on the sands, remember. I intend to invite myself to dine with Mrs. Mordaunt to-

day; I shall endeavour to amuse her, in your absence, by a little confidential chit-chat."

Julia thanked him for his kindness, and hurried out of the room in search of her friend.

Henry Mordaunt had now been several months at the cottage, which to him had been the happiest he had ever passed: the society of Julia had given an additional charm to the pleasure he enjoyed in this visit to his native home. With reluctance, deep-felt reluctance, he now owned the necessity of obeying the unwelcome summons he had lately received. He must quit those scenes, which had been endeared to him by every tie of affection and friendship;

but the stern mandate of duty he must obey, and bid adieu to all who were dear to him.

These reflections for a moment cast a gloom over his mind; but it was only of transitory duration: the light buoyant spirits of the young sailor surmounted every difficulty. He laughed off the dejection of himself and Mrs. Mordaunt, to whom he first mentioned his intention to leave home in consequence of the orders received from his captain.

Henry rallied his mother on the unfounded fears she expressed of never seeing him again; and playfully asked her, if she could expect to keep him always at her elbow, as she did Jane. She had, he said, lived so long in re-

tirement, that the world was by her considered as a great rapacious monster, "seeking whom he may devour."

When mentioning his intended departure to Julia and his sister, he told them they would perhaps see him again sooner than they expected: "So no fretting, dear little Jenny," said he; "who knows but in a few months I may have the command of a ship myself; and then, what will you say to your brother the captain? Come, hold up your head, child; don't look so serious about it; one would really think I was going to be killed and eaten by the wild Indians. I shall have a fit of the dismals myself if I stand looking at you, unless you will change that doleful look for one of your pretty dimpled smiles;

which become you much better, take my word for it."

"It is selfish, perhaps, to wish you to remain," said Jane, "when I know it will be to your advantage to leave us; but it is so seldom we can see you at home, that when you are here I am unwilling to part with you. You shall not, however, again have occasion to reproach me for my dismal looks: for poor Julia's sake I ought to be as cheerful as I can, although it seems that we both are to be deprived of those we most love and esteem."

"Of those we most *love* and *esteem*: Umph!" said Henry, with a provokingly satirical air. "I wonder if that refers to me, or to a *certain* person in India,"

added he, with pretended gravity; at which Jane, spite of her regret, could not help smiling: this was precisely what Henry wished.

"There, Miss Denningham," said he to Julia, "I have conquered at last, and brought back that pretty smile I wished; does it not become Jane much better than such very sedate sorrowful looks? O if my brother-in-law, that is to be, the great Nabob, could see her!" said the mischievous, laughter-loving Henry, enjoying the visible confusion of his sister, in which Julia could not forbear joining, his air and manner were so truly ridiculous.

"Be careful how you jest with your sister," said Julia; "perhaps some time

hence she may have occasion to retort your malice."

"And I will not spare him, believe me," replied Jane, "for he delights in teasing me; I will take the very first opportunity of retaliating without mercy."

"Then I cannot long hope to escape your malice, for it will soon be my fate, as well as yours, Jane, to be separated from those *I most love* and *esteem*," said he, looking at Julia, and then at his sister. The speech was couched in general terms; but the eloquence of the eyes told what the tongue had left unsaid, and pointed out the object to whom, in particular, the meaning of his words was addressed.

Jane was from that moment convinced of what she had before only suspected, that Julia had indeed enslaved the heart of her brother. There was a seriousness, a tenderness in his voice and manner, that spoke something the same language to the mind of Julia, who had not hitherto observed, that his attentions were in the least particular towards herself. A vague idea of the truth crossed her imagination at this moment, which suffused her cheek with the unbidden blush. She was fearful that even this involuntary emotion would betray her suspicions, which she on no account wished should be known to Henry; as it might argue a degree of vanity, in taking to herself only what could as well be understood to be applicable in a general sense. The fear of her embarrassment being perceived only in-

creased her confusion; she leaned out of the casement-window, as if to gather some of the jasmine which shaded it, but, in fact, to conceal her blushes from the notice of Henry Mordaunt and his sister.

But this expedient availed her nothing; for her lover approached, and gathering one of the moss roses that mingled their sweets with the snowy buds of the jasmine, he presented the flower to Julia: "That flower," he said, pointing to the spray of jasmine she had already gathered, "is an emblem of a spotless mind; and this the blush of modesty on the cheek of innocence: may I present them to one already adorned with the graces of both?"

"Dear Julia, you have wrought such

a change, such an entire reformation in Henry, that I can scarcely credit the evidence of my senses; for, from being quite a rough sailor, he is really turning gallant!" said Jane.

"No disparagement to your sweet self, Jenny, but what if I never before met with (in my estimation) one so truly worthy of admiration as Miss Denningham? will you then wonder at the change her influence has wrought?"

"You know I am too partial a judge to be appealed to, when Julia is the object of debate," said his sister: "so settle it as you please; I will have nothing to say."

"*I* should have enough to say, if I thought what I could *wish* to *say* would

influence the sentiments of Julia," observed Henry, regarding our heroine with impassioned tenderness.

Mrs. Mordaunt, just at this moment, returned to the cottage with Mr. Morland, and interrupted the conversation of the younger party; to one of whom this intrusion was particularly vexatious, as the leading object of the conversation was to him of the utmost interest.

Henry Mordaunt, diffident of success, had in part made known his sentiments to Julia; hoping by her manner to be able to judge, if he could with safety venture a still more decided declaration of his love. Like most young men, his pride revolted at the idea of being refused; and, as yet, he had but little reason to hope: why then, he thought,

should he too hastily betray the influence she had gained, till more assured that she at least did not prefer another? This was the fear that had of late haunted his mind, and added to his natural diffidence of himself. He had again and again questioned his sister as to this subject, who had in sportive malice assured him, that her friend "had *innumerable admirers*, but to *which* Julia gave the preference, she could not pretend to say; no doubt *one* of them had engaged her heart."

This was said merely in jest; but love rendered Henry suspicious, that there was more in reality in what his sister had asserted, than he could have wished.

Among the few young men, who were invited with their female relations to

the occasional parties at the cottage, he had endeavoured to discover *which* was the favoured lover; still, by Julia's conduct, he could not trace out the happy man.

Equally polite and atttentive to all their visitors, she received their attentions without any indication that she preferred one more than another: ever affable and lively, she yet maintained that degree of reserve, which is the indication of modest diffidence in the female mind.

The sincere regret she expressed when his intended departure was first mentioned, gave him renewed hope, and led to the conversation before alluded to; but Henry could not be yet quite certain, that he had not the in-

fluence of a rival to dread. And in this painful uncertainty he inquired again of Jane, and entreated her, most earnestly, to tell him the whole truth of all she knew respecting Julia and her several admirers.

To his unspeakable joy Jane positively declared, that he had no rival to fear; for Julia's affections were not, she said, engaged to either of her admirers he had seen at the cottage.

As the day approached when he must quit Westcombe, Henry became more desirous of knowing the real sentiments of Julia, before he left England. Unfortunately for him, Mr. Morland had, by his unwelcome intrusion, prevented any further explanation for that day; and just at the moment when he was

certain Julia must in part have comprehended, that his admiration of her was more ardent than that of a friend only, or even of brotherly affection.

The embarrassment visible in the ingenuous countenance of Julia whispered to the lover's mind a hope, that she comprehended all he would have said, and that she did not wholly disapprove his professions of regard.

The next interview with Julia was still more favourable to his wishes. After hazarding an explicit declaration, she did not entirely reject him, as he had at first feared; neither would she consent to consider him in the light of an accepted lover. Julia frankly told him, that, till the return of her aunt, she would not give him hopes, which it

might never be in her power to realize; for, unless sanctioned by her aunt's consent, she would never receive the addresses of any young man. She must, she said, consult Mrs. Denningham, before she could think of him in any other light than that of a friend.

"Oh! Julia," said the impassioned youth, "consider the dreadful, anxious state of suspense, in which I am doomed to leave you: say only that you do not prefer another; tell me, at least, that I have no rival in your heart. Julia, dear lovely Julia, in pity spare me the misery of imagining that, while far distant I dwell with fond delight on your loved image, another, at that very moment, is the favoured possessor of your heart.

"Had I worlds, Julia, I would sacrifice all for you; for what would every earthly good be to me without *you?* O do not then pronounce my misery, by dismissing me without hope, that, when sanctioned by the consent of your worthy aunt, my love, my unalterable affection, may not be disregarded."

Julia again assured him, that he had no rival to fear, that she esteemed him beyond any other; but any farther hope she could not then give him: he must be for the present satisfied with her friendship, for as a lover she could not encourage his addresses.

"Not even if my mother sanctions them?" said Henry earnestly. "You well know, dearest Julia, what a friend

and confidant she is of Mrs. Denningham's; surely she can judge if your aunt would be likely to object to my hopes of one day becoming the husband of her niece."

"Henry, my resolution is fixed," replied Julia, with modest firmness; "I cannot deviate from the line of conduct my own sense of duty approves. I must repeat, that, till my aunt sanctions my choice, I will never receive the addresses of any man, however favourably I may be induced to think of him."

Henry Mordaunt, convinced it would be useless to urge his suit with any other arguments, was compelled to resign, (for the present at least,) all hopes of engaging Julia, by any promise, to consider him as her accepted lover.

Grieved and mortified as he was at first by this cruel disappointment, yet, on cooler deliberation, the conduct of Julia raised her in his esteem, and added to the interest she had already excited. The delicacy, the propriety with which she had acted, even though it were a partial rejection of his addresses, had claimed his respect and admiration; her character became more exalted in his eyes, and added another charm to the perfections of his fair mistress.

The departure of Henry Mordaunt we will now pass over: it was a painful event to all parties; and would have been still more severely felt, if it had not been that news arrived of the most favourable nature from India.

Charles Denningham had obtained a

still more important situation in that country, which would prove of the greatest advantage to him. He seemed to entertain the hope, that the next year he could, without any material loss to himself, engage a person as substitute, to perform the duties of his appointment; which would enable him to leave India for a time, when he should hasten to England, and claim his "long betrothed bride, his beloved Jane."

This pleasing intelligence was particularly acceptable at this period; for Mrs. Mordaunt had, since Henry had left them, relapsed into her former state of ill health and depression of spirits: she grew rapidly worse, and the nervous complaint, which had long preyed on her constitution, returned with aggravated symptoms; she appeared fast sink-

ing to decay, and all her natural energy of mind was broken by the encroaching power of disease. She had for the last two years been gradually wasting in bodily strength; and now the increased danger, which menaced her valuable life, was but too visible in her pale and placid countenance: death was marked in every line; her features all bore the stamp of long and patient suffering; her weak and worn-out frame gave proof, that she was not long to be an inhabitant of this world of care and strife. The meekness of her angelic spirit beamed in the bright effulgence of her eyes, which alone retained the softened expression of superior beauty. Every other trait of loveliness had faded beneath the withering hand of sickness, slow and undermining in its progress, but true to the aim of the tyrant, who

directed the fatal shaft: life shrunk as it approached, and only hovered for a while; for scarcely could it be said to dwell within the frail tenement of earthly mould, it was so soon to quit for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

One evening, when Julia and her beloved friend Jane Mordaunt had by turns been reading to amuse the poor invalide, she was suddenly seized with a violent spasmodic affection, which seemed to threaten her very existence. Alarmed at the sudden violence of the attack, medical advice was immediately sought: the gentleman who had long attended Mrs. Mordaunt was summoned to her assistance without delay. But vain was all earthly aid: in less than one hour after the commencement of the paroxysm, the vital spark had fled,—the spirit had soared beyond all earthly regions, and left its humble dwelling of

mortality, to seek the fair mansions of eternity.

The heart-rending anguish, which this dreadful and unexpected calamity produced, is beyond the powers of description to depict. In silent, speechless agony the tender affectionate daughter hung over the pallid lifeless form, that lay stiffened in the cold grasp of death.

Julia, whose every faculty had been nearly paralyzed by the dreadful suddenness of their loss, could scarcely imagine it possible, that Mrs. Mordaunt, her friend, her adviser, was indeed no more. She continued to kneel beside the body, and chafe the icy hand, still hoping life might not be quite extinct; till the clay-cold, rigid stiffness of the muscles told her all hope was vain.

A faint shriek from Jane, as she fell senseless on the body of her mother, roused Julia from the stupor of grief, which had till then taken possession of her mind. Summoned to the exertion of all her fortitude, she determined to perform the painful duty assigned her; and, as the most indubitable proof of her affection for the late Mrs. Mordaunt, she resolved to befriend her truly amiable daughter to the utmost of her power. She staid not to consider her own desolate condition: she sought only to alleviate the distressing afflictions of her early friend, her beloved companion.

In performing the last offices of friendly gratitude to Mrs. Mordaunt, she felt that consolation, which the virtuous alone can feel, the heart-soothing

plaudits of an approving conscience, a boon beyond the power of splendid vice to purchase, though *worlds* were offered as its price.

With a mind strengthened by the exertions she had been called upon to make, our heroine was enabled to render the most essential services to *her*, who at this trying moment of affliction needed all the considerate tenderness of Julia's affectionate zeal.

Stifling her own bitter reflections, Julia, with a promptitude beyond her years, gave the necessary directions for the arrangement of the family concerns of the deceased; who, from the suddenness of her last fatal attack, had not named to either Julia or Jane whom she would wish the latter to reside with,

and who would take charge of the little property she had to leave.

Neither our heroine nor Jane had imagined the danger of Mrs. Mordaunt so great, as many more experienced persons of their acquaintance had, for some time previous to her death, believed to be the case. Young, and sanguine in their expectations, they fondly hoped she would yet recover; and when the arrival of Henry had for a time given unusual vigour to her nerves, they more fervently believed she would be again restored to her former health and spirits. Even the poor sufferer herself did not, probably, imagine she was so soon to be numbered among the dead, and leave her child to the care of strangers, at the mercy of an unfeeling world.

Julia would not intrude these painful reflections on the mind of her companion. Care-worn and spiritless from the excess of her grief, Jane was no longer capable of acting for herself; and had it not been for the prudence and consideration of Julia, she would have been left entirely to the mercy of those who would probably have taken advantage of her present imbecility, to rob her of the trifling sum of money she had left when her mother died.

Mr. Morland and Julia superintended the management of every thing: the former gave directions for the funeral, and himself performed the painful duty of consigning the mortal remains of his respected friend to their kindred dust. After this melancholy task was over, he wrote to the uncle of the late Mrs. Mor-

daunt, to whom he represented, in the most touching manner, the unprotected situation of Jane; and since all resentment towards the mother must now be past, he entreated him not to forget the claims her child had on him, as being his nearest surviving relative.

Mr. Morland, well aware of the eccentric disposition of the man he addressed, and the parsimony for which he was notorious, couched his letter in such terms as were likely to induce him to befriend the hapless orphan of his niece. He represented the mild domestic disposition of Jane, and the many virtues that adorned her character he described in the most lively manner, hoping thus to interest the heart of the miser in behalf of one so amiable. But what most availed the cause of the or-

phan, in the eyes of her parsimonious uncle, was, that she was likely so soon to be provided for, by other means than a dependence on his generosity.

Mr. Morland had urged, it would be only for a year or two, at farthest, that Jane Mordaunt would need the protection of her mother's relations; for she was engaged to one who would, by that time, be able to support her in a style becoming the real rank of her family connexions.

This was indeed the most acceptable news to the old bachelor uncle, who began at first to fear that, by encumbering himself with the care of his niece, he should be expected to leave her part of his very ample fortune; and the consequence would be, he should have to

maintain a being in the same house with himself, who would every day be wishing his death, that she might be at liberty to enjoy his wealth.

The certainty of her being likely to get well married, without any dowry being expected from him, put the old man into such good humour, that he actually wrote a very complaisant, if not a kind letter to his niece, informing her, that, by that day month, he should be in readiness to receive her at Beechen Grove; but it would require that time for him and his housekeeper to prepare for her reception, as he must now fit up an additional room, for he only kept furnished such rooms in his house as were indispensably requisite.

This one simple fact plainly told the

miser-like disposition of the man; and poor Jane trembled to think, that the next year, at least, must be spent at the house of one who would, in all probability, grudge the very trifling additional expense of her maintenance. But she had no where else to look for an asylum: she could, had Mrs. Denningham been at the Priory, have remained with her and Julia till the return of Charles from India: but that benevolent friend being absent, this was impossible; and even Julia herself must now leave her home, and reside with one of her relations in London: she could not, young as she was, remain at the Priory entirely unprotected; it would not be prudent to do so.

As all correspondence had ceased with the Alvingtons since Charles Den-

ningham had come of age, Julia did not choose to write to that family: she preferred applying to one of her aunt's relations, to being under any obligation to those whose conduct she had every reason to despise.

Sir George Alvington had behaved so ill with respect to her brother, that Julia was certain her aunt had ever since determined to be on the most distant terms of civility with him.

Lady Alvington and her daughters had never been favourites with our heroine, who had sufficient discernment to see through the artifice and affectation of the young ladies, and their fashionable and unprincipled mother.

Mrs. Brudenell, the lady to whom

Julia determined to represent her present desolate situation, was a widow of good fortune, but not very prepossessing in person, being immensely fat, and bloated in features, which gave a vulgarity to her whole figure. She was an elderly woman of about forty, tall and masculine in manners, with a voice of uncommon harshness: a kind of boisterous jocularity gave her an air of assurance, which the consciousness of having a well-filled purse, solely at her command, not a little increased. She had, early in life, contrary to the wishes of her family, married a very rich but low mercantile man of business. Though a considerable merchant some years before his death, he still retained the manners of the rank in life to which he had formerly belonged; and this blunt coarseness of demeanour Mrs. Brudenell had

insensibly adopted as her own, thus rendering all the expense and trouble, which had been expended on her education, utterly useless, for no one could be in her presence one hour, and not perceive the change which low company had made in the once pretty miss Dormer.

It was her beauty which had attracted Mr. Brudenell's attention. He swore, "he had money enough to *buy* the prettiest wife in Christendom, and he would have pretty Ann Dormer, if love or money could get her:" and if the *love* did not, the *money* did succeed in obtaining the fair damsel for the rich old merchant. In less than six weeks after he had made her the offer, miss Dormer (then in the height of youth and beauty) became the wife of alderman Brudenell,

and figured away in the gayest dresses, and with the gayest carriage and liveries, that his money could purchase.

This lady had not long buried her husband, and was yet in the deepest weeds for her worthy lord, when Julia wrote to request leave to reside with her for a few months, till the return of her aunt; which request was most readily complied with; for Mrs. Brudenell liked the parade of patronage, and she was not altogether illiberal in some of her notions. She really wished to serve Julia, and was not a little gratified, that her young relation should have selected her, in preference to being with the family of sir George Alvington; for the good lady knew nothing of the recent coolness between sir George and her cousin Mrs. Denningham.

She wrote immediately, to assure her "young cousin," as she styled Julia, that she should be proud to receive her in Portman Square, as soon as she could conveniently come; and on no account to make herself uneasy as to the absence of her aunt, for she should have every attention paid to her comfort, the same as if she were still under the protection of Mrs. Denningham.

This kind letter, in whatever want of elegance it was written, was a source of real consolation to our distressed heroine. She felt happy (comparatively speaking) in the idea that she had now a home to go to, and a relation ready to receive her with every demonstration of respect, if not of affection. Deserted as she had till now felt herself since the lamented death of Mrs. Mordaunt,

this assurance seemed like a peculiar blessing of Providence, who had, in pity to her unprotected state, raised her up friends, where she had but little right to expect them; for Mrs. Brudenell, she knew, was but indifferently known to her aunt, and had been noticed but seldom by Mrs. Denningham, owing to their inclinations and manners being so widely different.

"It must then," thought Julia, "be the natural goodness of her heart, which prompts Mrs. Brudenell to this kindness towards me."

Under this pleasing idea, our youthful heroine wrote to her relation in terms of the warmest gratitude, and at the same time thankfully accepting her friendly invitation; but declined availing herself

of it immediately, as she had some arrangements to make previous to her quitting Westcombe, which would require her presence at the Priory for the next month; after which time she would gladly avail herself of Mrs. Brudenell's kind offer.

The arrangements, which Julia alluded to, the reader will probably guess to refer to Jane Mordaunt, who could not leave Westcombe till the time appointed by her uncle. This rendered it impossible for Julia to consent to go immediately to town: she could not desert her friend, and leave her at this time a solitary mourner in the house of affliction. She therefore determined to remain with her till the month should be expired, which had been fixed for her to remain at the cottage.

Mr. Morland, who had been appointed guardian to Jane by Mrs. Mordaunt's will, which had been found in looking over her papers since the funeral, now took upon him to act as her executor, and took charge of the few valuables and papers of importance which the deceased had left, together with the sum of money deposited in the hands of a banker for the future provision of his ward. This, even after the sale of the few articles left by her mother, formed but a very slender income of itself; but, added to the money in the funds which Charles Denningham had settled on Jane Mordaunt, it would be found sufficient to support her in a plain economical manner, such as was most consonant to the wishes of that amiable girl, more so by far than the showy ostentation of high life.

After the funeral, with the approbation of their mutual adviser and guardian, Julia prevailed on Jane to remove from the cottage to the Priory, there to remain with her till she should go to Beechen Grove, the residence of her uncle.

It was with the utmost reluctance that Jane would consent to leave her own home, that home so much endeared by its having been the scene of past happiness, the abode of a parent who had been the charm that rendered that humble dwelling doubly dear to the aching heart of its now desolate inhabitant.

She at length yielded to the persuasions of her friends, and after taking one last long farewell of the beloved

cottage, she accompanied Julia to the Priory, and attempted, by diverting her attention to less melancholy objects, to regain that portion of fortitude which she thought incumbent on her to exert, in order that she might not, by unavailing regret, imbitter the few last weeks she had to spend with her more than friend, her sister Julia.

Mr. Morland was the watchful guardian of these two lovely orphans, and daily became their most welcome visitor at the Priory: to him they looked for advice and consolation, with the full conviction of his benevolence and disinterested friendship.

Many of the families residing in the neighbourhood came frequently to condole with miss Mordaunt and her friend

Julia; many too, with sincere kindness, offered their services, if in their power, to befriend them. But some, it must be allowed, came only to gratify their curiosity, and to "wonder what would become of the poor girls," left, as they now were, entirely unprotected.

The former were received with gratitude and respect by our heroine; but the impertinent curiosity of the latter visitors she very properly referred to Mr. Morland's prudence to silence, if he chose not to gratify the idle and intrusive questioning of the triflers, who came solely to indulge their propensity to interfere in the concerns of others, without the wish to alleviate the distress they thus unfeelingly intruded on.

The mild dignity of Mr. Morland's

manners repelled their prying impertinence, and effectually relieved his young friends from the embarrassment they would have felt at the curiosity their peculiar situation had excited among the village gossips of genteel life in the vicinity of Westcombe.

Henry Mordaunt had early been apprised of the calamity, which had so recently befallen his family after his departure from the cottage, then the blest abode of peace and contentment, excepting only the regret occasioned by his leaving its hospitable roof.

Not the most distant idea of his beloved mother's real danger had for an instant entered his mind. Weak and delicate as he left her, he was yet sanguine in his hopes of her recovery: to

him no symptom of approaching dissolution was then visible; she appeared only suffering from the same state of debility she had long complained of, and which he knew had been first brought on by continued anxiety and extreme grief. These had, indeed, impaired her constitution, "but she might yet live many years, to bless her children with her maternal affection."

Such had been the flattering delusion, under the influence of which he had left Westcombe. Tenderly attached to his mother, Henry Mordaunt felt most acutely the severity of the loss, which he and Jane had been called upon to sustain; and bitterly he regretted the impossibility of rendering that service to his unhappy sister, which his affection felt incumbent on him as her only

brother: his presence, his consolation, could not be granted to alleviate the misery he knew she must then be a prey to. Stung to the soul with these bitter reflections, he addressed Mr. Morland, as their only friend to whom in this hour of trial he could recommend the unprotected Jane. With all the fervour of youth, he blessed that worthy man for the services he had already conferred on his orphan sister; and concluded by beseeching him, in the most earnest manner, still to watch over her safety and comfort. That task he would gladly have performed himself, but that the duties of his profession forbade his presence at this most melancholy epoch of their life.

Mr. Morland, in reply to this epistle, assured Henry that he had nothing to

fear for his sister; for that Julia had, with a fortitude beyond her years, and a tenderness peculiar to her, been the guardian angel of his beloved Jane. She alone had had the art of consoling her under the most trying affliction, and had, with undeviating attention to her comfort and interest, exerted herself to the utmost. Here, the worthy Morland, ever partial to Julia, warmly commented on the merits of her exemplary conduct immediately after the death of Mrs. Mordaunt. He dwelt with enthusiastic esteem on the virtues of his favourite; and so strongly depicted her sufferings and exertions on that late melancholy occasion, that Henry wept with pity and admiration. He with joy found all his firm belief of her excellence more realised: she was all his fondest hopes could require in the object of his love.

Hers was a character which daily rose in the esteem of those who studied it; and, predisposed as he was to approve of all her actions, her present kindness to his sister, her fortitude and consideration, raised Julia, in the estimation of Henry Mordaunt, to the utmost perfection of excellence.

Anxious to express his gratitude, Henry Mordaunt resolved to write to Julia himself, instead of thanking her by means of Mr. Morland: he hoped for once he might be excused this liberty. She might now allow him to address her on whom his soul dwelt with fond delight, without being thought too regardless of her resolution not to encourage his addresses till the return of her aunt.

In language dictated by the purest emotion of respect, even to adoration, he gratefully acknowledged the affectionate attentions his sister had experienced from her since he last saw them. He earnestly entreated her to be careful of her own health, and not to suffer their misfortunes to imbitter her own prospects of happiness. Great as their loss had been, they had yet the consolation of knowing they had a friend, whom no change of circumstances could alienate: that Jane had a sister whose tenderness and love had been proved to the utmost; she could not then be quite destitute, while blessed with the friendship of one so truly amiable.

Henry wished, but feared, to revert to his own hopes on the expected return

of Mrs. Denningham; and he felt that, at such a period, there would be a want of feeling in alluding to such prospects, when the mind of Julia had been so recently depressed by the melancholy events she had been called to witness. He could not suffer selfish motives to intrude in this first epistle, said to be dictated solely by gratitude and friendship; for by what other sanction could he now address Miss Denningham? Yet, every line breathed the warmth of an affection he dared not openly avow. The interest he took in Julia's welfare was evidently beyond that of a friend or brother. Not the most indifferent person could peruse his letter, without perceiving his every hope of earthly happiness depended on her acceptance of him: she was the idol of his unbounded love and admiration.

CHAPTER V.

At the expiration of the month from the death of Mrs. Mordaunt, the young friends were compelled to separate. Jane Mordaunt had been apprised, that her uncle was ready to receive her, and expected she would proceed to his residence immediately on receiving this intelligence. After a sorrowful farewell, Jane departed from the Priory, and left Julia to prepare for her journey to town. Mrs. Brudenell had again written, and, with many friendly inquiries after her health, entreated Julia not to postpone her visit, as she was quite impatient to see her; and hoped the entire change

of scene would banish all melancholy thoughts.

Julia comforted herself with the idea, that her aunt must be now on her voyage home, for they had not for some time received any tidings of her from Jamaica. Her last letter informed them, that having concluded the sale of her property, she intended immediately to leave that island, and return without delay to England.

She mentioned her having written to Laura on her arrival in the West Indies, and her anxiety in not having heard from her in return. This Julia was not so much surprised at; for lady O'Neal had expressed but little regret at the necessity there was for Mrs. Denningham to quit England. She after-

wards told her sister, that, as their aunt would, in all probability, be soon with them again, she had not thought it worth while to answer her letter; and begged Julia to excuse her neglect as well as she could, for that she herself had been lately so much engaged, that she had not a moment to spare; for sir Carroll had his house full of visitors, come to congratulate them on their good fortune. Lady O'Neal informed Julia, that her husband had just come into possession of a considerable fortune, bequeathed him by a distant relation.

Laura, notwithstanding her great acquisition of fortune, had not the generosity to offer any return of the different sums of money she had received of her aunt. Many of these had been borrowed entirely unknown to her husband; and

of those known to him, he left it to her to arrange the payment, not doubting she would avail herself of their present improved circumstances, to repay all that was due. Still, engrossed by the pursuit of pleasure, from very thoughtlessness he was thus guilty of apparent meanness and injustice; for not the smallest part of the debt to Mrs. Denningham was ever repaid into the hands of her banker, as had been promised by lady O'Neal, when sir Carroll's circumstances should permit.

The consciousness of having wronged her aunt was one reason why lady O'Neal would not write to her. She had applied the money designed for her aunt to her own unbounded expenses; and, amid the continual hurry of dissipation, sought to banish the reproaches,

which would sometimes intrude even on the unprincipled Laura.

Julia had in vain hoped, that her sister would invite her to spend some time with her in Ireland, after she had explained her unpleasant situation, deprived as she now was of all protection, having lost Mrs. Mordaunt. She represented to her sister, that she should be obliged to beg an asylum at the house of Mrs. Brudenell, till the return of her aunt. Julia hoped, that when lady O'Neal should be fully aware of her unfriended condition, she would undoubtedly send for her immediately. But no such summons arrived; and Julia, with added grief, sat down to write to Mrs. Brudenell, driven to implore that kindness of a stranger, which her unnatural sister had denied her.

Struggling with her own heart-rending anguish, she strove to renew the hopes of the domestics at the Priory, who began to fear, as the housekeeper said, "that something had befallen madam, there beyond seas; there was no saying any body was safe:" And then, miss," said the old woman, "what will become of my poor girl, and my nephew James? Why, they will never get back again to old England, the Lord help their poor souls! 'Twas a pity, sure, that dear madam would go; but now there is no help for it, as a body may say."

Julia exerted herself to the utmost, to convince the servants that all would yet be well, and that Mrs. Denningham was on her voyage home; for had any

thing happened to her, either Lucy or James would have written.

With this belief she endeavoured to support her own sinking spirits, as she heard the chaise approach, that was to bear her from the home, which had for years sheltered her, to the abode of a stranger; one who, however kind, could never be to her the beloved, the affectionate friend that her aunt had been.

Mr. Morland came with the chaise; and, as he had before arranged, with the intention of accompanying her to town. He considered both Julia and Jane Mordaunt as his wards, and was equally solicitous for their welfare; but to the latter he was most particularly attached. The day before, he had re-

turned from his visit to Mr. Walmer, the uncle to whose care he was to intrust his ward. Julia was aware of this, and eagerly questioned him as to the reception Jane had met with from her miserly relation.

Mr. Morland refused, at the present time, to gratify her curiosity, but deferred it till they should be on their journey to town. An account of the strange being he had just left would then serve to beguile the time, and amuse the mind, of his fair companion. "My dear child," said he, "rest content; Jane will do very well. I parted with her in better spirits than I expected. The old man, her uncle, appeared much pleased with her: who knows but this may be a most fortunate visit for your friend? He may make her his heir-

ess; and he has no nearer relation, you know, so that she will wrong no one by winning his favour."

"Dear girl! he cannot dispose of his wealth to a more worthy object; but when my aunt returns, she will, I hope, have Jane to live with us, till Charles comes back from India. But I rejoice to hear her uncle is kind to her, and that you left her so cheerful."

"Come, come, we have no time to spare; Julia, my child, the carriage is ready," said Morland, observing that Julia lingered, yet unwilling to go from the Priory.

She had given the last orders to the housekeeper, and all was in readiness, when, again summoned by her guardian,

she took a hasty leave of the servants, who waited in the hall to have the last look of their "dear young mistress," as they styled Julia. Hurrying on in trembling haste, she stepped into the chaise; then casting one anxious tearful gaze on the surrounding objects, she hid her face in her handkerchief, and wept in all the agony of grief.

Julia and her fellow-traveller had come up to the lodge, before the former had regained her composure of mind. Her fine eyes were swollen with weeping, when they stopped at the gate, where old Dorcas and her good man waited to pay their respects as she passed.

"Lord love 'e, miss; don't take on so; madam will soon be here," said the old

woman, with her white apron to her eyes, unable to disguise her own grief, while she good-naturedly endeavoured to speak consolation to her young mistress.

Matthew, her husband, then came forward, and putting up a beautiful bouquet of choice flowers to the window, said, "Would you please, miss, to take a few flowers with you; belike they may be pleasant to smell to: they be all out of madam's best green-house, what she used to attend to herself so much: they be all monstrously grown since she left us: I wish she could see them now all in bloom."

The tear started in his eye as he thought of his mistress, and the length of time she had been absent. He hasti-

ly passed his hard hand across his brow, dashed away the unbidden tear, and again begged Julia to accept his present. She leant forward to take the nosegay, and, smiling through her tears, thanked him with all the cheerfulness she could assume, that he might not imagine she was unhappy. But honest old Matthew perceived too plainly the traces of grief on her lovely countenance; he could not forbear remarking it.

"Dear miss, you do know madam is expected home soon; you will soon be here again at the Priory: so pray, miss, cheer up, don't you be cast down," said he, with imploring earnestness.

Julia assured Matthew, that she believed as he did, that her aunt was indeed on her way home; and that by

the next spring she would revisit the Priory, after spending a few months with her acquaintance in London.

"God bless you both!" exclaimed the old man, with emphatic energy, as the chaise passed onwards. He staid to watch its rapid progress, till all traces of it were lost in the distance: he then slowly returned to the lodge, to talk over anew the cause of his regret, in which his good dame most cordially joined him; for these worthy people had grown gray in the service of Mrs. Denningham's family, and regarded her absence from Westcombe as the most serious evil that could befall them.

CHAPTER VI.

As nothing occurred to delay our travellers, they arrived in London the evening of the second day after their departure from the Priory. Mrs. Brudenell received them with a cordial welcome, declaring that Julia was just such another girl as she was herself a few years ago, only she was, indeed, a little more *sad.*

"But, poor thing! she has had enough of the *dismals*, I suppose," said she to Mr. Morland: "it will do her a world of good to see a little of life; it is a pity such a fine girl should mope away

the best of her days at that horrid old place the Priory."

"I think a little change of scene may be of advantage to Miss Denningham," said Mr. Morland; "and, under your kind care, madam, she will, I hope, recover her former health and spirits: she has had much of late to impair both," said he, with a sigh, which told how deeply he had himself participated in her grief. The memory of his departed friend obtruded on his mind, and saddened his benevolent countenance with an expression of unfeigned regret.

This momentary dejection was not unnoticed by the quick-sighted Mrs. Brudenell, who fancied from this that the late Mrs. Mordaunt had been more

than a mere friend of that worthy man; for she could not imagine so much feeling had been excited by one only, in fact, an acquaintance of his.

"Mrs. Mordaunt, my cousin's late friend," said she, with unfeeling curiosity, "was a near relation of yours, sir, I suppose; probably a sister."

"No, madam, no relation, but a most particular friend. I had the happiness to know Mrs. Mordaunt for many years: she was a most worthy character; a truly estimable woman. I was acquainted with her almost from a child, and her family are well known to me."

There was a mild and placid dignity in his manner, as he uttered this encomium on the virtues of his late friend,

which quelled the impertinent inquisitiveness of Mrs. Brudenell.

"O no doubt, sir," said she, rather embarrassed by the gravity of his deportment; "I only thought, from the great interest you seemed to take in the family arrangements after the death of Mrs. Mordaunt, that you must be some relation. You are, I believe, guardian to Miss Mordaunt: I think Miss Denningham told me you were."

"You are right, madam; I am guardian to Miss Mordaunt, and I have lately placed her under the care of her uncle. She is a very amiable girl, for whom I am much interested."

"O no doubt, sir," replied Mrs. Brudenell, perceiving that, from some mo-

tive or other, he did not like to be questioned as to the family of the late Mrs. Mordaunt. She had not the delicacy or refinement of feeling to perceive his real intention; which was to check her continuance of a subject so painful to the feelings of Julia, who, by this conversation, was cruelly reminded of the loss she had sustained.

Finding on this topic very little information was to be gained, Mrs. Brudenell amused *herself*, if not her *hearers*, in recounting all the ludicrous or scandalous tales, which had lately come to her knowledge. In less than one half hour she ran over all the news of the town; or, at least, of that part of it among the circles of acquaintance she could boast of in it.

"Would you believe it, my dear?" said she to Julia, "those silly dawdles, the Miss Alvingtons, are above speaking to me; and they toss up their heads as I pass them, and look as if I was not worthy to tread the same ground with them, the little conceited minxes! when, as poor dear alderman Brudenell used to say, "I have money enough to buy up all they are worth, twenty times over." But they were introduced into company, when they ought to have been in the nursery; and what good comes of it? Here they are not got married yet; though they may have had forty thousand danglers, for what I can say to the contrary. But what is there in that to boast of, unless they could secure a good husband with a large fortune? They will live to want it, take my word for it, with all their proud airs and

fancies; for their poor spendthrift father is next to ruined, I hear: for my part, I cannot think how he has kept on so long as he has."

"The Miss Alvingtons were never great favourites of mine," said Julia; "but I should be sorry to hear they were in distress. Sir George, I have heard my aunt say, is extremely thoughtless and extravagant."

"You visit them, don't you?" said Mrs. Brudenell. "I shall delight to mortify the girls, by taking you in my carriage when you go to call on them: they will be so provoked to find you chose rather to be with me than at their house; they will be ready to kill me for very spite."

"I have not visited the family for some time," observed Julia; "for my aunt has given up their acquaintance, ever since my brother came of age."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Brudenell, with evident surprise and disappointment; "then you would not have gone to them, if you had not come to me."

"No, certainly not: I should have remained at the Priory, or have accepted the invitation of one of our neighbours at Westcombe, to be with them till my aunt returned."

"Dear me, child! perhaps you may wait long enough for that, there is no saying; there are, you know, haps and mishaps by sea and by land: besides, child, your aunt is an old woman, she

may never live to come back: but I hope you are well provided for in case of the worst; that is the first look out, as I used to say when poor dear alderman Brudenell lay on his death-bed; it can't hurt the dying or dead to take care of the living."

The unfeeling, selfish Mrs. Brudenell might have continued her harangue for half an hour longer, uninterrupted by her auditress; the tender, affectionate heart of Julia shrunk from the rude and barbarous sentiments, which had been just expressed by that lady. She felt, too painfully felt, the impossibility of ever regarding such a selfish being as her friend; one who could coolly calculate on the supposed death of her relation, and with the most perfect indifference avow her own mercenary maxims,

when her late husband lay at the point of death.

"Oh!" thought Julia, "where shall I find another Mrs. Mordaunt! And if the worst *should* befall my aunt, my dear kind aunt, how can I live and forget her affectionate tenderness to me!"

The tears chased each other down her pallid cheek, rendered still paler by the shock which Mrs. Brudenell had given her feelings, at the bare suggestion that she might never see her aunt again, never behold that kind friend now so far distant.

Unconscious of what she was doing, or where she then was, Julia clasped her hands, and in the anguish of her heart exclaimed with pathetic earnest-

ness, "Oh! my aunt, my dear beloved aunt! I cannot live if deprived of you; where can I find one half so worthy, half so amiable, as you have ever been to me!"

"Why, child, one would really think you saw at this very moment the ghost of your aunt: come, none of these fancies, for mercy's sake. I have no taste for the dismals; and besides you will only spoil your eyes, child: all this crying and lamenting will do no good, you know; so it is best to cheer up, after all, since you can do your aunt no good."

This last part of the argument was certainly too true to be refuted: and Julia, fearing the displeasure of Mrs. Brudenell might be incurred by giving

way to her grief, resolved for the future to be more on her guard, and not to suffer her emotion, at the mention of her aunt, to betray her into such excess of grief.

She longed to be able to return with Mr. Morland to the dear seclusion of Westcombe. She cast many an imploring, piteous glance at her guardian, expressive of her wishes, and the dislike she felt, spite of herself, to the coarse unfeeling Mrs. Brudenell.

But in vain was the appeal: her friendly Mentor sincerely compassionated her wounded feelings, but strongly urged her to strengthen her mind to the trial she was called to endure. He advised her to resolve to continue where she was, as it would be but for a few

months at farthest; and then she could return to the Priory, under the protection of her aunt. Julia yielded to the advice of her considerate friend, and resolved to bear with fortitude the evils she must submit to.

Mr. Morland remained two days in Portman Square, and then returned to the vicarage at Westcombe.

After his departure, Julia was deprived of her only friend, and again felt herself the most desolate and unprotected of human beings.

Mrs. Brudenell, under a pretence of amusing her young visitor, insisted on taking her into company immediately. Proud of the beauty and accomplishments of her cousin, she hurried Julia

from one house to another, determined that all her city acquaintance should know she had the sole care of her young relation: and she was not backward in asserting, at the same time, that Julia would be heiress to her aunt; and that her sister, lady O'Neal, gave the most splendid parties in Dublin, and was visited by none but the first people of rank and fashion!

Julia was soon convinced, that Mrs. Brudenell was not visited by that class of society her aunt had been accustomed to associate with. The visitors she had been lately introduced to were mostly people who had made their fortunes in trade; and many among them had thus risen from the very lowest stations to their present independence and affluence. So much of their time

had been devoted to the accumulation of wealth, that but a very small portion could be spared to the improvement of the mind. To these illiterate persons Julia was called upon to display her talents for music, drawing, and any other accomplishments, which Mrs. Brudenell wished her to exhibit. Many thought her "uncommonly clever;" but others said, it might be all very fine, but, after all, it was of little use: she had better learn to cast up accounts, and make the most of her money she was likely to have at the death of Mrs. Denningham.

But, among all the caprices of Mrs. Brudenell, Julia had nothing seriously unpleasant to complain of; for that lady was uniformly attentive to her comfort and happiness, as far as she was capable

of judging. Refinement of feeling she had none, and had been used to consider it a weakness in every other; she could not, therefore, be expected to be so scrupulous and delicate in her ideas of genuine politeness, as one of our heroine's more polished cast of character. She wished to make her young acquaintance happy, and thought she did all that could be required of her, when she amused Julia by an unceasing succession of company, or frequent attendance at all the genteel places of public amusement; and Julia could not blame her for the coarseness of her manners, which she was not herself sensible of. And, as she was evidently desirous to make her visit agreeable, she thought it would be ungrateful in her not to appear gratified by her attentions, and to seem, at least, to take an interest in

the various amusements Mrs. Brudenell daily planned.

Among the numerous acquaintance of that lady, Julia had observed a young man of dashing appearance, who studiously endeavoured to render himself attractive in the eyes of the rich widow. This son of Mars was the constant attendant of Mrs. Brudenell, either at her public or private parties: his address was rather pleasing than otherwise, and his person, though not decidedly elegant, was tonish; and, when compared with others he met at her house, he was the very pink of the mode. With all the disposition in the world to indulge in the follies of fashion, he had but a very slender income to support the dashing style of life he had lately adopted. The wealth of the rich

widow of alderman Brudenell would, therefore, be of the most essential service to him; although encumbered with the lady, no very desirable acquisition to one of his way of thinking; for she was full old enough to be taken for his mother. But of what consequence was this to the gay captain Ashford? He could still be the buck of fashion; and leave her at free liberty to solace herself for his inattention, either by the society of her humdrum city friends, or else in the last recipe for low spirits, the exhilarating libations to Bacchus; for Mrs. Brudenell, he well knew, was not in the least averse to become one of the votaries of the said divinity. And he was in hopes, if he should succeed in winning this fair and portly dame and her many thousands, "that the old lady would soon kick the bucket,

and leave him to *bemoan his loss;*" for so he elegantly expressed himself.

Julia, though not then so much in the secrets of this hero as my reader now is, still had observed his great attentions to Mrs. Brudenell, and the extreme compliance with which that lady received them; but she had not the most distant idea, that Mrs. Brudenell meant seriously to encourage captain Ashford in the light of a lover. Nor was it likely, that one so young, and inexperienced in the selfish plans of the worldly-minded, should suspect the real views of the gay and mercenary being, whom she considered as a mere boy, when compared with the matronly age of his intended bride.

What then was her astonishment,

when Mrs. Brudenell one day inquired, "if she should have any objection to be bridemaid to any lady of her acquaintance?" Julia thought this was asked in a peculiarly simpering way, as if "more was meant than met the ear." She replied, that she should be very happy to act as bridemaid to any one of her friends, but she had not heard of an intended match among her own acquaintance: "was it a friend of Mrs. Brudenell's, who was going to be married?"

"Dear me! child, you are very dull of comprehension just now. Why it is *I* who am going to be *married*; the alderman has been dead these six months, and no widow thinks of mourning longer than half a year, not a woman that is of high fashion, I mean: next month I

have engaged to become the wife of captain Ashford. He is a charming pretty fellow; don't you think he is? Besides, he is so good-tempered, so easy to be pleased, I shall manage him like a child when I am his wife: I shall have quite my own way, the same as ever; so never fear, my love," said she; "you shall still continue with me; though many a wife would not much like to have such a pretty girl as you in the same house with such a young husband as the captain."

Julia's astonishment was so great, that she could not forbear exclaiming, with evident surprise, "What, captain Ashford? the same captain Ashford I have seen so often at your house?"

"Bless the girl! one would think I

was going to be married to the Monument, or some unaccountable thing or other," said Mrs. Brudenell, evidently piqued at the manner in which Julia had uttered her exclamation of surprise and doubt. "What, I suppose now you think me too old to marry: but *all* young men, Miss Denningham, are not to be taken with a pretty face; though, for that matter, *I* am not so *very* old looking either. Captain Ashford is a prudent young man, and knows how to make a good choice in a partner for life."

"I beg your pardon, but I did not mean to offend you," said Julia; "I only thought, I only— I—" here our poor heroine knew not what to say, to appease the gathering wrath of Mrs. Brudenell. She could not recall her

own words, which had given so much displeasure; nor could she express her approbation of the choice that lady had made.

"Well, well, child; you are too young to be a good judge of these things, I see," said Mrs. Brudenell. "I am not offended; but I am rather hasty in my temper, and you did provoke me a little by your wonder-struck looks; as much as to say, I had no business to marry such a dashing young man as the captain is. But I dare say you meant no such thing: you shall be my bridemaid; and I shall not forget to make you a handsome present on the occasion."

This was said by Mrs. Brudenell, in hopes that the bribe would make her companion as earnest for the intended

wedding, as she had lately appeared averse to it.

Julia said nothing more on the subject either way, but merely to thank her for her kind intentions. It would, she thought, be highly improper and unbecoming in her, as a visitor, to attempt interfering in the domestic plans of Mrs. Brudenell; but she more than ever prayed for the return of her aunt. For, after his marriage, captain Ashford might choose to consider her as an unwelcome intruder; and, from what she had observed of him, his character did not appear in the most favourable light: in every respect he was the last man in the world, to whom she would consent to be under any obligation.

Amid these painful reflections, Julia

had nothing to console her but the long tried friendship of Jane Mordaunt. To her she represented her present difficulties, and from her received renewed professions of regard, with the full determination to render her every service in her power. Jane said she was greatly in hopes, by the influence she had gained over her uncle, that he would, to oblige her, invite her friend to remain at his house till Mrs. Denningham should return to England.

Jane had frequently hinted a wish of this kind to Mr. Walmer, and that parsimonious relation had not altogether refused compliance with her request; for, as he shrewdly observed, "the same rooms would do for both: it would be but the difference of what the poor

"Child, you are young and innocent I trust; you do not, from hopes of gain, act the semblance of an affection and pity which you do not feel. Jane, Jane, I would not be *again* deceived!" said Walmer, his aged frame trembling with agitation; "let not selfish motives direct your conduct, for my wealth is not designed for *you;* and can you really esteem me, do you think, for *myself alone?* Speak, child, can you feel attached to me? despicable, miserly, as I am called by the world, can you yet love me as your own natural relation?"

There was an earnestness and scrutiny in his very look, as he fixed his piercing gray eyes on the countenance of his niece, that seemed to penetrate her very soul, as she attempted to convince him she was innocent of all selfish

motives in her professions of gratitude and esteem.

"Then, Jane, I will consent to receive your friend, if, after mature deliberation, I find I can afford it," said Mr. Walmer, with a degree of hesitation in his manner, which plainly told, he had by no means yet determined on what, from affection to his niece, he wished to consent to.

"But, dear uncle, Julia will with pleasure pay for her board, if you in the least object to the expense!" said Jane.

"Pay for her board!" repeated the old man indignantly; "do you think *I* would receive her money? *I* receive an *orphan* to my house for the sake of *gain?* No, Jane, if my heart is shut

against doing good, I am too proud to take advantage of any one. I only fear ingratitude, the dread of being driven again to ask assistance from those I have served, and to find myself repulsed with scorn. This, this, Jane, is what makes me the miser I am: but it is my own wealth I hoard up; I have a right to do so; yet I would not wrong the orphan, or take advantage of the needy. Child, I see you do not yet know me."

"Dear, kind uncle, be not offended; I meant no reflection on your conduct. You have been a friend indeed to me; and I should be the most ungrateful of beings, if I did not acknowledge this. But you say you only have hoarded up your own, and have a right to do so: yet is not this a false notion of right? Dear uncle, pardon my boldness; but is

it not said in Scripture, 'where much is given, much will be required?' Why then should you lay by a useless hoard of wealth, when it has been placed by Providence with you as a deposit only, for the use of which you must hereafter account? It was not meant to be bestowed in vain; it will not be sufficient to return the talent as you received it: you will be expected to do good with it to your fellow beings. You have a heart to feel for the sufferings of others: why then, from the ingratitude of the few, should you deny yourself the purest happiness that riches can purchase, by alleviating the misery of the many, who groan under the distresses of poverty or misfortune?"

In the enthusiasm of the moment, Jane forgot the bounds she had hitherto

prescribed herself, in the influence she had already gained over the mind of her uncle: the words had escaped her lips before she had considered how her well-meant remonstrance might be taken. Conscious, by his extreme agitation, that she had gone too far, she trembled for the consequences; a suffocating sob was his only reply. Alarmed at his increased emotion, Jane threw herself on her knees, and clasping his hand, entreated her uncle to speak; to tell her if he could forgive her presumption, in thus dictating to him the duties of his rank in life.

"Forgive you child! how can I forgive you? when you have dared to speak the *truth*, the *undisguised truth?* a language which is not to be met with but in the words of innocence itself,

undisguised innocence like thine, Jane. The world has scoffed at me, has despised my parsimony, branded me with the odious name of miser! But none yet have whispered the friendly admonition, you have, from pure affection, bestowed on a wretched being like myself."

He raised and embraced his niece with unfeigned regard; and again repeated his assurance, that he was not displeased with the language of firm, but mild expostulation, with which she had ventured to address him. As a proof of this, he again assured her, that her friend Julia should be cordially received at his house, if she really preferred being with them, to continuing with her London acquaintance.

As no *if* was now brought forward to make the resolution doubtful, Jane thankfully accepted the proposal, and immediately wrote off to her beloved Julia, to invite her to the Grove. Every argument, which she thought likely to induce her friend to accept the offer, she strenuously urged, reminding our heroine, that however eccentric Mr. Walmer might appear at first, yet he had an excellent heart, and was already much predisposed in her favour: he would not, therefore, fail to receive her with kindness.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHAT have you there that pleases you so much?" inquired Mrs. Brudenell, as she entered the breakfast-parlour, and perceived, by the ingenuous countenance of her visitor, that she had just received some very pleasing intelligence. "It is a billet doux, no doubt," added that lady, eyeing the open letter very inquisitively.

"No, ma'am, it is a letter from my most particular friend, the Miss Mordaunt you have heard me mention; we have been acquainted from children,

and my poor dear aunt had a great regard for her."

"Then I am sure she must be a great oddity, if she is a favourite with your aunt; for she never liked any one that other people would," said Mrs. Brudenell sarcastically.

Julia, rather hurt at this disrespectful manner of speaking of her aunt, and not very partial to her present abode, determined to avail herself of Miss Mordaunt's invitation, as soon as she could leave Mrs. Brudenell, without offending that lady by her intended change of residence.

"Miss Mordaunt has been so kind as to invite me to spend some time with

her at her uncle's," said she with some hesitation.

"But you surely do not mean to accept it?" said Mrs. Brudenell; "you cannot think of leaving me till after my marriage; besides, you were to stay with me till Mrs. Denningham returns. It is not well for young people to be moving about from place to place; I cannot hear of your leaving me yet: and what should you for, child? You have meat, drink, and clothing; now you are as well off as you can in reason wish."

Julia found it would be impossible to leave her present abode, without incurring the most violent indignation of Mrs. Brudenell; and, situated as she then was, she dared not risk her dis-

pleasure; as she knew the malicious and vindictive temper of that lady, if ever in the least opposed. For the present, therefore, she judged it most prudent to give up all idea of going to Beechen Grove, the residence of Mr. Walmer.

Mrs. Brudenell, pleased with the ready compliance of her visitor, made Julia a present of some fashionable trinket, and very graciously begged her to keep it for her sake; again reminding her, that she would give her something better worth her acceptance, when she should be her bride-maid.

The society of this low-minded woman would not have been so intolerable to Julia, but that she frequently spoke of Mrs. Denningham in the most dis-

respectful manner, ridiculing her foibles without mercy; and that too before strangers, who could not possibly judge of the merits of her real character, and were of course unduly biassed in their opinion of her, by the many eccentricities they heard so greatly exaggerated. Not even the presence of Julia herself could check Mrs. Brudenell in indulging her mirth and love of censure, when speaking of Mrs. Denningham. Devoid of all feeling herself, she felt not for the poignant mortification she daily inflicted on the affectionate niece, while she thus unmercifully exposed the follies of the aunt.

This alone was sufficient to render her present situation particularly irksome to our heroine: she would gladly have given up all company, all the

gaiety in which she now shared, to be again in retirement, unmolested by the impertinence and arrogance of Mrs. Brudenell. She most earnestly wished to accept the kind invitation of Jane and Mr. Walmer; but she could not determine on such a step till she had consulted Mr. Morland, whom, in the absence of Mrs. Denningham, she considered as her guardian.

Upon asking his advice, she was painfully disappointed; for that worthy man did not approve of the plan she and Jane Mordaunt had most wished. He gave it as his opinion, that she ought to remain with Mrs. Brudenell, at least for some time longer, till she could hear from her aunt; that, as there appeared no very serious objection to her continuing where she then was, he deemed

it imprudent to quit the protection of a relation for that of a stranger. It was natural, he allowed, that Jane Mordaunt should wish to have her at her uncle's; but, for the present, he could not sanction such a scheme with his approbation: it could not be long before something would be heard of Mrs. Denningham, as it was now many months since she had given them reason to expect her return.

Julia could not but acknowledge the truth and prudence of her worthy friend's arguments; yet, it was equally impossible not to feel disappointed at the result. She must remain with a woman she particularly disliked; more her aversion, indeed, than any other human being; and she must renounce all hope of seeing Jane Mordaunt: this was, indeed, a most afflicting disappointment.

In this difficulty, Julia was resolved once more to represent her disagreeable situation to lady O'Neal, hoping, if her sister should offer to take her to live with her, that Mr. Morland would not then object to her leaving that coarse, vulgar woman, Mrs. Brudenell. Thinking that she probably had not been sufficiently explicit in her last appeal to the affection and pity of Laura, she determined to state the unfeeling disrespect she was daily compelled to hear respecting the conduct of her aunt.

Julia, knowing the devoted love which Mrs. Denningham had ever shown towards her favourite niece, imagined, very naturally, that lady O'Neal would dislike, as much as she could herself, the person who dared to ridicule one so worthy of esteem. She thought that

lady O'Neal would not allow her, as her sister, to be under any kind of obligation to Mrs. Brudenell, when fully apprised of that lady's meanness and vulgarity; for even the apparent generosity, which at first won the gratitude of her young visitor, was to be traced to her love of power and superiority. It was pride and the spirit of patronage, that had induced her to receive our heroine; and she would have been greatly enraged, if Julia had in the least failed in expressing her gratitude for the protection thus granted her.

Mrs. Brudenell thought too, she should now have an additional claim on the acquaintance of her kinswoman, on her return from the West Indies; for though she secretly envied, and outwardly affected to despise Mrs. Denning-

ham and her singular mode of thinking, yet she wished much to associate with her circle of very genteel acquaintance, among whom Mrs. Brudenell was unknown, or considered far inferior in point of rank and elegance.

That the society of one so unamiable should be repugnant to the feelings of Julia, may be easily imagined. She waited, day after day, in anxious suspense, still in the expectation of hearing either from her aunt or sister. Three weeks were thus passed by our heroine, in the vain hope of being summoned by lady O'Neal, to exchange her present residence for her house in Dublin.

The letter was at length received, but its contents were far different from

what Julia had anticipated: not one expression of kindness was given to lessen the pain of a refusal. Lady O'Neal briefly stated, that it would be utterly impossible for her to receive her sister at her house, as it was then full of company for the winter; that Mrs. Brudenell being willing to keep her, (meaning Julia) till Mrs. Denningham returned to England, she advised her sister to try and please her as much as possible, as it would, no doubt, be most prudent, since she had no other home to go to. "As to any reflections on the conduct of their aunt, that was nothing extraordinary; she was always allowed to be a most eccentric being!"

Shocked at the want of affection which this epistle evinced, Julia wept

in bitter disappointment, and felt, for the first time in her life, a degree of resentment toward Laura, which nothing but her extreme unkindness and disrespectful mention of her aunt could have excited in her bosom. Mortified by this, and the absolute refusal of all assistance, Julia determined, whatever might be her future sufferings, she would never again appeal to the affection of Laura; she would never again implore her protection, however she might want a home to go to.

What made this cruel treatment more unpardonable was the improved circumstances of sir Carroll, whose fortune would now enable him to receive Julia as his wife's relation, without heeding any additional expense it might occasion him.

Lady O'Neal had informed her sister, that sir Carroll had his house full of company, and had insisted upon keeping open house, in rejoicing at the birth of a son and heir to his newly acquired fortune.

On such an occasion, any one would have supposed, that Laura would have been glad of the opportunity to invite Julia to spend the winter with her in Dublin, as she knew sir Carroll would be at any time happy to have her with them. But the jealousy of lady O'Neal was insurmountable; she could not prevail on herself to submit to be rivalled by her sister in beauty; and this she knew would be the case, if she were to be introduced among the circles of high life in the gay metropolis of Ireland.

Julia in vain summoned all her fortitude to bear this cruel neglect with the composure she wished. Her spirits forsook her, and it was with the utmost difficulty she concealed her vexation from the prying eyes of Mrs. Brudenell, who more than suspected the unkindness of lady O'Neal; for she had frequently inquired if Julia were not much surprised at not hearing oftener from her sister. She had observed the dejection of our heroine, and made no doubt it was partly owing to the neglect she experienced from Laura.

It was now three months since Julia Denningham had left the Priory, and no intelligence of Mrs. Denningham had been received. Alarmed at this protracted delay, Julia again wrote to Mr.

Morland, entreating him to make every inquiry respecting what vessels had arrived from the island to which her aunt had been, and if all that had sailed from it the last autumn had reached England in safety.

Julia's fears for her aunt augmented daily: she dreaded, lest in returning she might have been exposed to all the horrors of shipwreck, and the dangers which she well knew must await Mrs. Denningham during so long a voyage.

The attention of Julia was, for a time, somewhat diverted from these melancholy reflections, by the preparations made for the intended wedding.

At the expiration of the six months' mourning for her late husband, alder-

man Brudenell, his *disconsolate widow* became the *happy bride* of captain Ashford.

Julia, as the bride's attendant, accompanied them to Bath, to the no little satisfaction of that amiable girl. Had Mrs. Brudenell (now Mrs. Ashford) purposely consulted the gratification of her fair companion, she could not more agreeably have surprised her, than by this arrangement, planned according to the suggestion of the gallant captain, whose love of gaiety, and what he termed dashing society, induced him to fix on Bath as their future residence for the next two months. His comely dame was, at first, at a loss to imagine, why Julia was so particularly pleased at the idea of going to Bath.

"Why child, you look quite another

person since we have talked of going to Bath," said she; "I have never seen your eyes look so bright and sparkling before this moment, since I have been arranging about our going. Have you any acquaintance at Bath?"

"Miss Mordaunt, my dear kind friend Jane Mordaunt, lives at no great distance from Bath. Beechen Grove is but two miles from that city," said Julia.

"Really, my dear, one would think this same Miss Mordaunt was a lover in disguise, you are so very desirous to see her. If she had a *brother* now living with her at her old uncle's, I should think there was some other motive, besides *friendship*, which led you to wish so much to be at Beechen Grove."

This was said with such a provokingly sarcastic air, that Julia, conscious as she was of the share she had in the affections of Henry Mordaunt, blushed deeply, as Mrs. Ashford concluded her ill-bred remarks with this allusion to the brother of Jane. Fortunately her embarrassment escaped the attention of that lady, she being just then too much occupied in selecting from among her various expensive dresses such, as she thought would be most becoming for her to wear when at Bath.

Seeing her thus engaged, Julia made her escape, and immediately commenced writing to Jane, and surprising her with the joyful tidings she had herself just heard.

In this occupation we will now leave

her, and give the reader some intelligence respecting Charles Denningham and Henry Mordaunt. The former had again written to inform his beloved Jane, that he should quit India in less than three months; that all was arranged for his intended departure, in such a manner as would be no injury to his prospects of emolument from the situation he then held in that country; and he had now only to look forward to the delightful hope of meeting her, and all he loved, in England.

In his letter to Julia, he tenderly reproached her for not having said more of their aunt, and inquired after her in the most affectionate manner. He had not been informed of the absence of Mrs. Denningham; for Julia had but slightly mentioned her aunt when she

last wrote to her brother, fearing she might betray the secret she had promised to keep from his knowledge. Mrs. Denningham had just left Westcombe at that period; it was, therefore, not in her power to make much mention of her to Charles: and, as to lady O'Neal, her conduct had been too reprehensible, to allow Julia to make any favourable mention of her proceedings.

To the great surprise of Charles, Julia had said less of either Mrs. Denningham or Laura, than in any former letter; and Jane Mordaunt had been equally silent on the same subject. This omission, on her part, he was not so much astonished at, as at the unusual silence of his sister respecting their family concerns. From the circumstance of Henry's unexpected return, and the

joy such an event must have created, he thought Jane was, perhaps, then too much engaged to give her attention to any other object; he most sincerely rejoiced at the happiness his beloved Jane and her worthy parent must experience on again beholding one so long absent, and so worthy of their unbounded affection.

He knew not the melancholy tidings that awaited him; "a blindness to the future kindly given" concealed from him the grief that hung over his fate, and that of those he loved. The death of Mrs. Mordaunt, and the lengthened absence of Mrs. Denningham, he was yet ignorant of; the former calamity had been too recent to allow him to be informed of it when he last wrote; and

of the latter circumstance he had been purposely kept in ignorance.

Henry Mordaunt had been successful in obtaining the command of a ship, and soon after received orders to sail for the West Indies, to join the fleet stationed there. He had, before he proceeded on his voyage, the satisfaction to hear, that the reception of his sister at her uncle's had been far more favourable than she had expected.

He was informed by Jane, that his beloved Julia was almost equally fortunate; and she was to remain with her relation Mrs. Brudenell, till the return of Mrs. Denningham, which was almost daily expected at the time he left England.

This pleasing intelligence, and a message from Julia herself, which bespoke the interest she took in his happiness, enabled Henry to quit the shores of his native land with less regret than he would otherwise have felt, had he not been assured of the comfort and protection secured to Julia and his sister by the kindness of their respective relatives.

On his arrival in the West Indies, he had promised, should Mrs. Denningham not have left the island of Jamaica, he would, if possible, endeavour to see her; and he, in his lively sportive way, rallied Julia on her fears respecting her aunt. "Perhaps," said he, "I shall have the honour, some day, of bringing home Mrs. Denningham, myself, should she be longer delayed than you now expect; and then be sure I will take

advantage of so fair an opportunity to plead my own cause. I shall win the old lady's consent to claim her fair niece on my return to Old England."

CHAPTER VIII.

ALMOST immediately after her marriage, Mrs. Ashford proceeded to Bath; and Julia, delighted at being again in the neighbourhood where Jane resided, was again cheerful and comparatively happy. Accompanied by her own female attendant, she went, the day after her arrival at Bath, to Mr. Walmer's, Beechen Grove not being too distant for a walk.

Jane Mordaunt was, the moment when Julia arrived, employed in reading over the news of the day to her aged uncle, as was frequently her custom, at his request. The servant had no sooner

pronounced the name of Denningham, than Jane, starting from her chair, threw the paper hastily on the table, and springing to the door, was out of sight in an instant, to the no little amazement of Mr. Walmer, who had but imperfectly heard the name of the visitor announced.

In this perplexing surmise as to the cause of his niece's abrupt departure, Jane returned, and introduced the stranger as the Miss Denningham he had before given her permission to invite to his house; at which, the old man, slowly rising from his arm chair, came forward to welcome our heroine with every assurance of the satisfaction he felt in beholding "one who had," he said, "been such a faithful friend to his good little girl," (meaning Jane Mordaunt.)

"You will find my household very different, young lady, from those you have been accustomed to, and its master, perhaps, not less singular; but such as you find them, they will be proud to receive you. Jane has prepared me, by her praises of you, to estimate your character, as in merit beyond that of any others of her acquaintance. You are welcome, Miss Denningham, to Beechen Grove."

After this formal, yet friendly salutation, he joined the young people in their more enlivening discourse, and appeared so good-humoured and cheerful, that Julia could scarcely believe he was the miserly, misanthropic being she had heard him described; she could hardly repress an exclamation of surprise, at

finding the niggardly old Walmer (as he was commonly called) could behave with so much urbanity to a stranger.

The old man, guessing by her looks, (which spoke her agreeable surprise as eloquently as words could have done) observed that, since Jane had been with him, he had become quite young again; "she had," he said, "almost charmed him out of his misanthropics."

"But I will leave you together," said the old man: "I have no business, old as I am, to intrude on the secrets of my young visitors; I shall go and take my usual walk round my farm, and shall come back time enough to meet you both again at dinner." So saying, with a smile of good-humoured playfulness,

he left them, as he said, "to tell their love secrets uncontrolled by his presence."

When left alone with Jane, Julia regretted the necessity she was under of residing with Mrs. Ashford; but it was impossible to be otherwise: for to Mr. Morland she could not explain *all* the disagreeables of her present situation; some, in fact, she could scarcely prevail on herself to name even to Jane, her dearest friend. The most unpleasant circumstance, which increased her dislike to live in the same house with the Ashfords, was the extreme familiarity, even to insolence, of captain Ashford's behaviour towards herself. He appeared, even before his marriage, to regard her as little better than a dependent on Mrs. Brudenell's bounty; and now, as

the husband of that lady, he evinced his sentiment more plainly; so much so, that Julia had positively declined receiving any presents whatever from his wife. She was not, fortunately for her, compelled to require any pecuniary assistance of Mrs. Ashford, for Mr. Morland had liberally supplied her with cash, more than sufficient for her expenses. He had in charge, for her use, the sum Mrs. Denningham had left when she went from the Priory; part of which he had given to his ward, when she went to reside with her relation in town. This made Julia feel herself more independent than she could otherwise have done; yet, it was impossible not to feel and resent the disrespect, with which captain Ashford addressed her. She knew him to be depraved and dissipated in the extreme: there was a something

in his manners particularly disgusting to the delicacy and refinement of Julia. Bold and licentious in his language, he had, within the short space of one week, thrown aside the assumed veil of propriety, which had hitherto disguised the real sentiments of his heart, and betrayed to his deceived wife the real motive, which had induced him to become her husband. Instead of the idol she had raised up in her imagination, she too late beheld him in his true character,—the hardened hypocrite, the dissolute man of fashion.

Captain Ashford was, indeed, a perfect libertine, unrestrained in his pursuits, either by the laws of religion or morality.

Julia knew not the extent of his vices;

she had never liked him; and, since his marriage, her aversion had been strengthened by the conviction, that he had acted with unpardonable duplicity, by professing an affection he could not feel, and this too from the basest and most sordid of motives.

To none but Jane could our heroine have opened her whole heart. She had no right to betray the family proceedings of Mrs. Ashford or her husband to any indifferent person; nor would she, even to her dearest friend, but that she felt so unconquerable an aversion to remaining under the same roof with captain Ashford, that she found herself obliged, in part, to explain the reasons for her dislike to him.

After a day spent in delightful con-

ference with each other, the two friends were compelled to relinquish the pleasure of their mutual society; and Julia reluctantly took leave of Jane Mordaunt and her venerable uncle, with a promise to visit them again, as soon as another opportunity offered.

On her return, she found Mrs. Ashford in tears; her husband had refused to accompany her into public; and, in spite of all her entreaties, had persisted in declaring, he never meant to be seen at the Rooms with her.

This was a most dreadful disappointment to the afflicted fair one, who now might, with truth, be styled the "Mourning Bride!" She had hoped to outshine many of the titled dames in the richness of her ball dress, which she had ordered

for the occasion of her first appearance in public.

In vain she remonstrated on the barbarity of his conduct. The undaunted captain was unrelenting; and, at length, wearied out by the alternate complaints, intercessions, and threats of his wife, he silenced all argument, by declaring boldly, "he had married her for her money, not for herself; and he would never become the jest of his acquaintance in Bath, by escorting an old woman about, who might very fairly be taken for his mother."

Dumb from the excess of her rage and disappointment, Mrs. Ashford stood for some moments like one petrified, without the power of venting her indignation, on the wretch who had so deli-

berately avowed his perfidious villany. The calm was of no longer duration, than till his exasperated wife could recover breath to denounce her vengeance on him in terms of the most opprobrious abuse, and threats of her bitterest revenge.

Captain Ashford very coolly replied, by begging she would not waste her breath in useless revilings; she had far better take all calmly, and be content. "You had much better, madam, employ yourself in preparing to receive *my friends*," said her husband. "I intend to invite several gentlemen to supper to-night, and I wish to treat them as such; therefore I insist upon their being received well. As to your threats, I defy them: remember, *I* have full and un-

controlled possession of your property; you have not a penny independent of my will. You will find it more to your advantage to *obey* than to *resist* my commands."

Saying this, he left her to the care of her attendants, and went out to join his dissolute companions, with whom he laughed at the "fracas" he had had with his "old bride."

Mrs. Ashford was in a strong hysteric fit, when Julia entered her chamber. Terrified at this sudden indisposition, our heroine eagerly inquired of the servant if any thing had happened to alarm her mistress. The girl hesitated at first to reply; but on being again questioned, said "there had been sad

doings indeed; master and mistress had been quarrelling all the day like cat and dog."

"For my part, miss," said she, "I am almost frightened out of my wits, and I shall certainly give warning to leave; for master is such a different man to what I thought him when I came with mistress from *Lunnun*."

Julia, unwilling to encourage the gossiping of the servant, sent her away when she perceived Mrs. Ashford was likely to recover without further assistance. That unhappy woman, when she found herself unobserved by any but Julia, gave way to a burst of grief; and weeping over the recollection of what had just passed, she bitterly lamented the misery she had brought upon herself

by her ill-judged marriage with captain Ashford.

Julia, pitying her truly deplorable condition, tried, by all the persuasion she was mistress of, to soothe the irritated feelings of her wretched companion. She represented how much better it would be to submit, with a reasonable degree of calm fortitude, to the evils she so much deplored. Perhaps, too, she might succeed far better in influencing her husband by kind and gentle remonstrance, than by violence and unavailing threats. He might, if he saw her desirous to please him, change his resolution, and consent to accompany her into public, since she so much wished it.

This hope pacified the unfortunate

Mrs. Ashford; and, after due consideration, finding she could gain nothing by contradiction, she set about obeying her imperious husband's late commands; and, by the time he returned at night, with five or six of his gay comrades, he found an elegant supper in readiness for him and his guests.

This compliance with his orders, and the exhilarating effects of the excellent wines at his table, so far put the captain into good humour with himself and those about him, that he actually consented to accompany his despised helpmate, with a large party, to the theatre, the next evening.

So far Mrs. Ashford had been successful; and she hoped, in time, to prevail on him to treat her with the at-

tention she thought herself entitled to, and at least, to the world, appear as if he were not ashamed of her.

The disappointment this weak vain woman had experienced, in the hope of being allowed to dispose of her wealth as she pleased, and with it out-rivalling all her acquaintance, had considerably soured her temper, never by nature the most amiable. She dared not give way to her caprice and ill-humour toward her lord and master; but vented her spleen on all her domestics, without mercy, and even on the inoffensive Julia; of whom she became so exceedingly jealous, that she would scarcely allow her to be out of her sight, lest her profligate husband should bestow those compliments on her beauty, which she would fain have exacted for herself alone.

Because Julia, in the goodness of her heart, had, at the entreaty of Mrs. Ashford, occasionally endeavoured to intercede for her with the captain, and had often successfully exerted herself to make his home agreeable, that ungenerous being, his wife, imagined our heroine had gained too much influence over her recreant spouse; and that, in fact, her pretended friend and adviser, the artful Julia, was her insidious enemy, and dreaded rival.

The innocent object of her hatred could not, for some time, imagine this possible, that any woman in her senses should be so mean, so suspicious, particularly one whom she had so strenuously endeavoured to serve. To add to the extreme misery of her situation, Julia was at length convinced by the

conduct of captain Ashford, that he actually had some base design against herself. His flattery was disgusting to the chaste ear of our heroine; and the freedom, with which he had for some time behaved to her, made her shudder as she perceived the motive of his conduct.

When he could by any means find her alone, his language was that of a professed libertine, who, basely taking advantage of her unprotected state, dared to hope he could insidiously swerve her pure mind from the path of rectitude, by the unhallowed creed of vice.

One evening, when his spirits were unusually elevated by wine, he found Julia alone in the drawing-room. Miss

Ashford had left her for a few minutes only, to give some directions to her domestics; and the lovely girl, fearing no interruption, had been playing over some of her aunt's favourite pieces of music. She was deeply engaged in practising one which she had nearly forgotten, when captain Ashford entered the room. He instantly approached her, and addressing her with his accustomed adulation, he extolled her skill in music, and inquired what she had done with "the old Jezabel," meaning his wife.

Shocked at this vulgar allusion to Mrs. Ashford, she made no reply; but shutting her music-book, rose from the piano, and would have left the room, but that the captain, guessing her intention, stood between her and the

door, and swore he would not suffer her to go: she should first have a little conversation with him, as he had something particular to say to her. Saying this, he seized her by the arm, and forcibly seating her on a sofa by him, he insisted upon her listening to his proposal.

She vainly remonstrated with the hardened villain, in whose grasp she was thus detained. He turned a deaf ear to her entreaties; and fearful of irritating him in his intoxicated state, she begged him to say what he wished to tell her, and allow her to leave him as soon as possible.

Trembling with fear, Julia's hand was still grasped in those of the captain: it was in vain she looked toward the door, hoping the return of Mrs. Ash-

ford would oblige him to relinquish his hold; but no footstep approaching gave the welcome signal for release, and our hapless heroine was compelled to listen to a proposal, which chilled her blood with horror.

After declaring his utter aversion to his wife, the villain proceeded to state the improbability of Julia's ever seeing her aunt again; she was, he said, therefore, quite unprotected: and he concluded this artful expostulation, by repeating the advantages of accepting his offer to reside with him as his mistress at his house in town, where, excepting the *name* of wife, she should have every indulgence, which luxury could devise, or wealth purchase.

Probably, had captain Ashford been

less intoxicated, he would not have risked so sudden and open an avowal of his intentions towards the innocent girl, whose ruin he had so infamously planned; but thrown off his guard by the effects of the wine he had taken, he could not resist the opportunity of making her the offer he hoped to induce her to accept, either from becoming an easy dupe to his fallacious reasoning, or from the fear of being turned out unfriended on an unpitying world.

He knew but little of her family connexions; he only considered her as a poor girl destitute of friends, who had been compelled to beg the protection of his wife, having no one else in England who would befriend her: he therefore considered the unhappy Julia as fair prey. She had no home to go to if in-

sulted; no friends to apply to for redress when injured. Her beauty and accomplishments had attracted his admiration; and when contrasted with the coarse person and manners of his wife, she appeared still more lovely in the eyes of this unprincipled libertine.

Julia, struck with horror at the atrocity of his vile proposal, uttered not a syllable; but expressed with a look, which told more than words, the terror which his conduct had excited. She had nearly succeeded in releasing herself from his grasp, when the door of the apartment opened, and Mrs. Ashford entered: she started back with an exclamation of surprise and anger, on perceiving the agitation of Julia and the embarrassment of the captain, who at that moment relinquished the hand

which he had persisted in holding, in spite of all Julia's endeavours to withdraw it from his grasp.

"A mighty pretty *tête-à-tête* truly!" exclaimed Mrs. Ashford, with a countenance more than commonly reddened with rage; "now then I have at last discovered *who* is the snake in the grass, you little ungrateful hussy, you poor little kitten-faced minx you! Ar'nt you ashamed of yourself, to come into people's houses and draw their husbands away from their lawful wives? But I will take care and let the world know what you are, now I have found you out, you false, deceitful baggage!"

Here Mrs. Ashford was obliged to stop to take breath; and then, addressing her husband in the same loud voice

of vulgar rage, she said, "I wonder *you*, sir, are not ashamed of yourself, to act in this manner, even in my very own house; *I*, who have raised you from a poor half-pay captain, to be a real gentleman! After the fortune I brought you, I think you might show me more respect, than to carry on your scandalous intrigues in this house, while I am mistress of it!" She would have continued railing on, but that she saw the gathering wrath of the captain, in the malignant curve of his lip, and the frown which contracted his dark brow.

"Madam!" said he, with an imperious tone of command; "if *you* call yourself *mistress* here, remember what I have before told you, that I *will* be *master* in my own house: it is no longer yours, I again remind you; and dare to

molest me with that cursed tongue of yours, I will teach you silence in a way you little imagine. I have a residence for you in the north of England, and there you may amuse yourself with spitting your venom at the other reptiles, that will be your only company in that desolate dwelling!"

Mrs. Ashford became suddenly perfectly calm: she turned pale with fear, as he again addressed her. "You may remember the old manor-house I told you of the other day, that has lately come into my possession; it will be an excellent winter residence!" said he, sarcastically, alluding to the ruinous state this old mansion was then in. He had before found this threat efficacious in reducing his wife to obedience: even when most refractory, Mrs. Ashford

could be subdued by the fear of being sent to the manor-house of Dallingsfield, which was situated in the most remote and dreary part of Northumberland.

Julia, glad of the first opportunity to escape from the detestable Ashford, left the room, while he was so successfully quelling the rage of his injured lady. Our heroine hastened to her own apartment, and having secured herself from all intrusion, she gave way to the feelings which made her heart throb with anguish; and, bursting into a flood of tears, she wept for some time in all the bitterness of heart-felt affliction.

She threw herself on her knees, and fervently prayed for the protection of that Almighty Power, who has said, "I will be a father to the fatherless, and a

friend to the afflicted mourner." Of that gracious Providence she implored the assistance, which should enable her to support, with becoming fortitude, the many evils that threatened her.

Gradually becoming more calm, she considered what plan she had better adopt for the future. She wrote to Jane Mordaunt to tell her of the insulting and degrading treatment, which she had lately suffered, and her full determination to quit Mrs. Ashford; and, for the next two or three months, to reside with her at Beechen Grove, as Mr. Walmer had before kindly invited her. The next day she proposed to be with him and her beloved friend and sister Jane.

Having dispatched a messenger with her note to Miss Mordaunt, Julia began

to employ her remaining time in packing up her wardrobe, and the few valuables she had with her; and, having completed this task, she sat down to write to Mr. Morland, explaining, as far as delicacy would permit, the ill-treatment she had endured, and the utter impossibility of continuing with Mrs. Ashford. She expressed her increased anxiety at the continued silence of Mrs. Denningham, and the hope, that before the time should be expired which she had promised to remain at Mr. Walmer's, her aunt would return, and she should be relieved from her present state of painful suspense respecting her: but, should this unfortunately not be the case, she had determined to try some method of providing for herself, without being an encumbrance to

her friends. She would engage herself as private governess in some respectable family; but to his more experienced judgment she would refer her present plans, before she attempted any.

Having concluded her letter to her guardian, and her messenger being by that time returned from the Grove, she was agreeably surprised to find, that Jane had sent with him a chaise and servant, to take her and her luggage that ver night from the detested family she was then with, and those who had so shamefully taken advantage of her youth and inexperience, to insult and disgrace her.

Julia, once more happy in the certainty of a speedy release from such irk-

some thraldom, sent for Mrs. Ashford's attendant, and, by her, begged to speak with that lady for a few minutes alone; for Julia was fearful of again encountering the wretch Ashford, should she again enter the drawing-room where she had left Mrs. Ashford. She wished, if possible, not to quit the security of her own apartment: if she were compelled to do this, in order to have the desired interview with the woman whose protection she was about to resign, Julia was resolved it should not be in the presence of the captain, for nothing should induce her to remain for an instant in the same room with him again.

As Mrs. Ashford was willing to see her, Julia went to her dressing-room, where she found her sitting alone, and

brooding, in sullen despondence, over her husband's harsh treatment, and the many indignities she was compelled to submit to.

Mrs. Ashford received our heroine with a haughty inquiry as to what was her very particular business, that she should wish to speak with her just then too, after having so lately been detected in the manner she had been, in encouraging the attentions of captain Ashford.

Julia, with just indignation at this insulting accusation, firmly declared her innocence, and her horror at the bare idea of being supposed guilty of such a crime. She then informed her incensed relation, that she intended to quit her

house that very night, for nothing should induce her to pass another under its roof, while she and captain Ashford were its owners. She was going to her friends at Beechen Grove, where she hoped to meet with more kindness than she had of late experienced from Mrs. Ashford, whose recent conduct had, in her opinion, cancelled every obligation for former attentions, for which she should otherwise have been sincerely grateful. Having said words to this effect to the astonished Mrs. Ashford, Julia insisted on returning the few trifling presents she had received of that lady previous to her marriage.

"So you are going to leave me!" said Mrs. Ashford. 'Well, go; go, I say, child. I forgive your shocking ingrati-

tude, and hope you may never want a home; but remember, *I* took you in, when you did not know where to go, and I have been well rewarded for my charity: but you may go; I bear you no malice," said she, with a sanctified show of meek forgiveness and affected humility, even more provoking than her utmost wrath.

Julia again declared, that she had not deserved the cruel accusation of ingratitude and perfidy; but that, after the improper behaviour of captain Ashford, she could not think of residing in the same family with him. She again pleaded her innocence of the heinous charge laid against herself, of having encouraged his attentions; and attributed his late conduct to the state of intoxication

he was evidently in when he had molested her.

For the sake of Mrs. Ashford, Julia considerately wished to lessen the appearance of premeditated guilt; and, in part, this truly charitable intention was successful, at least for the time.

Mrs. Ashford seemed much more friendly in her manners, and even expressed regret at parting under such unpleasant circumstances. She condescended so far, as to hope that Julia might be comfortable at the Grove: she, at the same time, however, took care to remind that amiable girl, that she must not expect to meet with the comforts and indulgence there, which she had enjoyed while with her in London.

"That old miserly Walmer my husband knows something of. He will almost starve you before you have been there a month. I fancy, child, you will be glad before then to come back again to me. Well, much good may it do you in this choice of your friends," said she, giving her hand, as she said, in token of parting good friends; "for my part, I can forget and forgive; though *some* people *are* so very high-minded."

Julia, rejoicing to leave this low-minded woman and her libertine husband, was extremely glad to find herself seated in the chaise, and proceeding rapidly towards Beechen Grove, where we will now leave her, and give a brief sketch of the history of Mr. Walmer, the wor-

thy man to whose residence Julia was now hastening, as the nearest surviving relation of her friend Jane Mordaunt, to whose intercessions she was indebted for the respectable asylum offered her, under the most distressing event of her whole term of existence.

It was with the deepest regret Mr. Walmer peceived the thoughtless extravagance of the elder Mordaunt; but he felt unwilling to check him in his mad career of folly, lest it should appear like reluctance to assist him in his distress, which he so frequently brought on himself by his own imprudence. It might, too, be considered as presuming upon the obligation Mr. Mordaunt was under to him, to attempt to remonstrate on the conduct adopted by his friend.

Naturally refined and delicate in his feelings, Mr. Walmer thus reasoned when he contemplated with regret the rash unthinking conduct of Mordaunt. Won by the repeated professions of regard from that insidious friend, he had not the firmness to deny him that assistance he so frequently needed. Walmer

relied on the honour of his unprincipled companion, who had bound himself by every protestation, to repay the different sums lent him. This was to be done when he should come into possession of an estate, which would devolve to him on the death of an old relation of the Mordaunts.

Not doubting the integrity of these professions, Mr. Walmer had never required the payment of even a part of those sums he had advanced; having himself no other claim on him than the provision for his younger brother, and the orphan child of his late sister, he was totally unconcerned as to the time of payment; and, generously considering the circumstances of his friend, determined to wait his leisure, and on no ac-

count to bring forward his claim at so unseasonable a time.

Mrs. Mordaunt (then Miss Hervey) had been left entirely dependent on the bounty of her uncle. Her parents dying in rather embarrassed circumstances, the amiable Walmer promised to provide for her as his own child; and accordingly placed her, soon after the death of her mother, (his only sister) under the care of a lady who was to superintend her education, and with whom she was to reside; being occasionally allowed to visit her uncle, but never to remain any great length of time from her kind and accomplished preceptress.

From her earliest youth an attachment had subsisted between her and

the younger Mordaunt, whom she constantly met during her visits to Mr. Walmer. The mutual affection of the young people had not been remarked by the elder branches of either family, till a most unpropitious period, when the cruel mandate of dissension obliged these youthful lovers to resign all hope of obtaining a consent to their union from either of their respective families.

Mr. Walmer had been at length too fatally convinced of the mean duplicity of his pretended friend, to wish to continue his acquaintance with him, or any member of his family. All intercourse was forbidden; and the unfortunate Jane Hervey and Henry Mordaunt were informed, that they must meet no more. They were denied all correspondence; and so exasperated was Mr. Walmer at

the base conduct of the elder Mordaunt, that he forbade his niece to speak to either of the brothers, should she by any chance meet them at the house of any other of their acquaintance.

The injury, which had occasioned such violent contention, was of a nature the most irritating to the feelings of a being so noble and disinterested as Mr. Walmer. The elder Mordaunt had not only wronged him, but insulted him in the grossest manner, denying the debt which had so long been due to his confiding friend; and this ingratitude was heightened by the circumstances of his duped benefactor, when Mr. Walmer most needed the return of his generosity.

Owing to unforeseen losses, the latter had found it necessary to apply for a part of the sum due to him from Mr.

Mordaunt. This request he the less scrupled to make, from the certainty that his friend could well afford to refund all he had borrowed, owing to his having come into possession of the property he had so long expected. But the latter, for a reason unknown to his generous benefactor, had never, since this addition to his fortune, made the least mention of the debt between them; although he could not be ignorant of the losses, and consequent distress of Mr. Walmer. More gay and dissipated than ever, he seemed to have forgotten all former obligation; and made not one offer to assist his worthy, but deceived friend. Perceiving this, and thinking it must be from the extreme versatility of Mr. Mordaunt, Mr. Walmer at length summoned the resolution, however painful it might be, to remind his friend of

the money still due; and which would then be most acceptable to him, as he had to provide for his younger brother, who was just then of age, and for whom he more deeply felt, than for the deprivations his late losses must occasion himself.

No pen can describe the surprise, the contempt, almost to horror, of the amiable Walmer, when, upon an explanation with the worthless Mordaunt, the latter wholly and boldly denied all obligation to him, excepting the loan of a very small sum, "but of which he had taken no account, never expecting to be asked for such a trifle. This he was willing to pay, since Mr. Walmer was so *penurious*, as to require the payment of what he had been led to consider as a gift."

This was a most fatal death blow to all Mr. Walmer's hopes of disinterested friendship in the world. He shrunk with horror at the conviction of so much sordid baseness, stunned with the atrocity and hardened insolence of the elder Mordaunt. He could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses, and that the treacherous companion of his youth had denied all recollection of the debt. Too indignant to argue with one who had so boldly asserted the basest falsehood, and had so scandalously wronged him, the injured Walmer retired from the presence of his enemy, disgusted with his perfidy, and breathing revenge, —implacable revenge!

"The law," he said, "should *enforce* the payment of that, which the injustice and villany of Mordaunt denied him."

Upon looking over his papers, he found he had not sufficient proofs of the debt; none that could authenticate his claims by means of the law. Never doubting the integrity of the perfidious Mordaunt, Walmer had not been careful to exact the proper acknowledgment of the various sums lent, which were to the amount of several thousands. Thus, by this one man's perfidy, he found himself involved in comparative indigence; and, what was a more severe blow than all, he found he was actually unable to pay the fortune of his brother, and the little portion he had intended for his niece. Stung to the soul by these reflections, and the black ingratitude of one, whom he had for years considered his dearest friend, the unfortunate Walmer fell sick, and became for a time perfectly insane in mind, as well as en-

feebled in body. His younger brother, who almost idolized this, his dearest relation, endeavoured, together with the kind hearted Jane Hervey, to restore the broken health and distracted mind of the wretched sufferer; who, for months, lay deprived of reason, and utterly unconscious of their tender assiduity and affection.

Restored at length to something like his former sanity of mind, he again persisted in the hope, that Mordaunt would repent of his villany, and be willing to make all the compensation in his power. It was with difficulty he was prevailed on to renounce all idea of again appealing to the justice of one, who would turn a deaf ear to his most touching remonstrances.

Once more able to superintend his own affairs, Mr. Walmer determined to sell the property he had in that neighbourhood, and to remove a few miles distant from the residence of the Mordaunts; where he meant to pass the remainder of his days in the quiet seclusion of a domestic life.

Previous to his removal to this humble dwelling, the sole remnant of his property, he wrote to the elder Mordaunt, again reminding him of his own intention to try what could be done to recover the money, which had been hitherto so shamefully withheld.

This letter was not answered till some time after it had been received, and then in so insolent a manner, as to aggravate, instead of meliorating the ill-

treatment, which the Walmers had already met with from Mordaunt.

Soon after this event, the brother of Mr. Walmer met the elder Mordaunt at the house of an acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Irritated to the utmost by the villany of the latter, Augustus Walmer could scarcely repress the indignation he felt at the sight of him.

Mr. Mordaunt, with supercilious hauteur, cast a contemptuous glance on the young intruder, as he chose to consider him. Not content with this, he yet further provoked the anger of Augustus, who, high spirited and careless of the consequences, publicly upbraided Mordaunt with his dishonourable conduct in the bitterest and most acrimonious terms of reproach. This led to still

more violent altercation, and, spite of the interference of their friends, ended in a challenge.

On his return home, Augustus said nothing of what had happened; and his brother remained ignorant of the quarrel, till too late to avert the fatal termination of this lamentable business.

The next morning after the challenge had been given, the opponents met as appointed. Augustus refused to make the required apology, and the seconds found it impossible to settle the affair amicably between him and his adversary. They fired, and the unfortunate youth received a ball in his left side. It had penetrated the heart, and he fell asserting the truth of what he had alleged against Mordaunt; who had, he

before declared, deeply wronged his brother, and most villanously deprived him of his right.

The gentlemen who had acted as seconds in this calamitous affair advised Mr. Mordaunt to quit the place immediately; for the friends of his late opponent would, no doubt, pursue him with the utmost vengeance of the law. Their advice was readily accepted. The guilty wretch, stained with a double crime, fled from the avenging rod of justice, and sought a shelter in a foreign land. Safe indeed from the pursuits of his enemies, but bearing with him the never dying worm of an accusing conscience, he there vainly sought that peace, he hoped the distinctions of rank and wealth could purchase for him.

After many years spent on the continent, he expired in all the agonies of remorse, of unavailing wishes to make some amends to his much injured friend: but he could not recall a beloved brother to the arms of the wretched Walmer; neither could he bestow on that worthy man the riches he had squandered in every kind of vice. The property he had so basely deprived him of, together with his own affluent fortune, were all expended before the guilty, blood-stained Mordaunt was summoned to that awful tribunal, where he must be brought to account for the crimes that had marked his ill-spent life.

The affliction of Walmer, on being apprised of the untimely fate of his brother, occasioned a relapse; and, for a time, plunged him again into all the

horrors of utter insanity. A deep melancholy succeeded a partial recovery from this dreadful state of mental derangement; he had then no other friend, no other relative, but the worthy Morland, and Jane Hervey. The former the reader may recognize as the curate of Westcombe, and the guardian of our heroine, Julia Denningham, of whom we have made frequent mention.

Though much younger than Mr. Walmer, Morland became his most active friend, his most able adviser. He had, from the circumstance of his having been the favourite companion of the unfortunate Augustus, acquired an ascendency over the poor invalide, which none other ever after possessed. By his means, Mr. Walmer so arranged the remainder of his little property, as to en-

able him to live in a comfortable independence, if managed with economy. The latter removed to some distance from his native place, and with his niece, Jane Hervey, retired far from those scenes, which must ever remind him of the melancholy fate of the noble-minded Augustus.

Mr. Walmer had not long been thus secluded from all his former associates, when he perceived the most alarming change in the health of his niece. This distressing change he attributed to the wish for those gaieties, she had been thus early compelled to renounce. After the first shock was past, at the untimely death of Augustus, he could not imagine what else could so imbitter her happiness. He grieved at her visible decline, and tenderly questioned her as to the

cause of her melancholy. She could not own the grief that preyed on her heart. She evaded his questions, and still persisted in denying any wish to share in those amusements, or mix in that society, she had so recently resigned.

After various, and equally vain conjectures, Mr. Walmer consulted with Morland; who informed him, it was his firm belief, that Jane and Henry Mordaunt had been long mutually attached. And now being separated, in all probability for ever, and hopeless of his consent to their union, the delicate health of his niece sunk under the contest between her affections and her duty.

Mr. Walmer could not at first be persuaded, that Jane should be really at-

tached to the brother of her uncle's murderer, for as such he execrated the name of the elder Mordaunt. To his delicate feelings this appeared too unnatural, too dreadful to be true. He staid not to consider how long his niece and Henry Mordaunt had been attached to each other before the mournful event which had deprived him of a brother. He did not consider, that, however hateful the character of Mr. Mordaunt had been, Henry was free from all censure. He had ever been sincere in his professions of esteem and regard.

Mr. Walmer, on questioning his niece, too plainly perceived, that the suspicions of Morland were just. Jane was undoubtedly attached to Henry, the brother of the infamous Mordaunt! Jane had, trembling with fear, been obliged

to confess she had secretly encouraged the addresses of her lover; and had, since their retirement, continued to correspond with him. This information greatly irritated her uncle, who accused her of want of gratitude and affection, in thus keeping up a clandestine correspondence with one so nearly related to his bitterest foe.

Morland, pitying the distress of the unhappy girl, pleaded her cause so warmly with his friend, that he prevailed on him to pardon the misconduct of his niece, and to allow of the visits of Henry Mordaunt, provided the youth never intruded into his presence.

END OF VOL. II.

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CASTLES IN THE AIR;

OR, THE

WHIMS OF MY AUNT.

VOL. III.

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CASTLES IN THE AIR;

OR, THE

WHIMS OF MY AUNT.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

"DUNETHVIN; OR, A VISIT TO PARIS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

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1818.

CASTLES IN THE AIR;

OR, THE

WHIMS OF MY AUNT.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Walmer had, as we before mentioned, consented to allow of the visits of Henry Mordaunt at his house; but nothing could induce him to behold this unoffending branch of his oppressor's family, as he designated every member of the house of Mordaunt. The very sound of the name was hateful to his ear; so firm was his unconquerable

aversion to any thing that reminded him of the fraudulent villain, who had so deeply, so irreparably, injured his peace of mind.

Not all that Mr. Morland could urge in behalf of Henry, the ill-fated lover of Jane Hervey, could subdue the prejudices of Walmer: the idea, that one related to him could possibly be attached to a Mordaunt, seemed in itself too great a degradation to be thought of.

"If Jane must have this Henry Mordaunt, I will not refuse my consent; I will not destroy her peace, though mine hath been blasted ever by the elder brother of her intended husband; and for this the very name of Mordaunt is to my wounded spirit a sound accursed;" said the wretched Walmer, with the an-

guish of one who yet suffered under the heavy load of misery.

" I will never see my niece the wife of a Mordaunt. If she marries Henry, I can see her no more; I will give her all I can spare out of the remnant, that villain, her lover's *worthy* brother, left me of my own property. But I again repeat, I can never more behold her; much as I love her, that can never be," said Walmer, in so determined a voice and manner, that Morland knew it would be useless to urge him to any further concessions.

The conduct of Morland had been particularly generous, in thus pleading the cause of the unhappy lovers; and great was the struggle in his own breast, while he thus eloquently besought the

compassion of Walmer toward the youthful lover of Jane Hervey. Morland had himself long been the most ardent admirer of that lovely girl; but his unfortunate passion he had kept from the knowledge of all; convinced, too clearly convinced, that it could never meet return: the heart of his beloved mistress was already bestowed on another, a more successful, but not a more amiable rival. Jane knew not the many hours of deep unavailing regret her partiality for Henry Mordaunt occasioned the worthy Morland; the latter she had ever esteemed, and considered the most deserving of men, except the favoured object of her affection. Morland perceived this, and, as her most disinterested friend, sacrificed his own hopes to the promoting her happiness, and that of his young friend Henry.

He saw, with heartfelt commiseration, the ravages which hopeless love had made in the fair form of her he loved, with the purest, the most devoted affection. For this reason, he again and again besought Mr. Walmer to receive the younger Mordaunt at his house; he partly succeeded, as the reader is already informed; and not very long after the uncle of Jane Hervey had reluctantly given his consent to her intended marriage, she became the wife of Henry Mordaunt.

For the sake of Henry, Jane had consented to renounce the affection of her uncle, and to brave the difficulties, which, as the wife of a military man, she would have to encounter; having little else but his pay to subsist on. For what Mr. Walmer could give his niece was,

as he had informed her, but a mere trifle compared to the sum he had once hoped to bestow on her.

Immediately on her marriage, Mrs. Mordaunt accompanied her husband abroad, and remaining absent from England many years, she heard but little of her uncle, except by the means of Morland. By him she was informed, that Mr. Walmer lived entirely secluded, and had, from living so much alone, acquired a great degree of eccentricity in his manners; that from being the most generous and open-hearted of men, he was become parsimonious in the extreme; always brooding over the melancholy idea, that he should outlive his little wreck of property, which the dishonesty of the world had left him. This notion had become so habitual to

him, that even when he had a considerable fortune left him, he continued the same mode of reasoning, and the same plan of life; so much so, that he was commonly designated by the appellation of the old miserly recluse.

When Mrs. Mordaunt became a widow, she returned to her native country, with her two children, Henry and Jane, and, by the advice of Mr. Morland, settled in the vicinity of the Priory of Westcombe, where, as has already been related, her retirement was enlivened by the society of Mrs. Denningham and her amiable family, who continued unremitting in their attentions to her and her daughter, till she was summoned to "another and a better world."

Henry Mordaunt had early been placed in a military academy, being intended for the army; but this plan was afterwards changed, in consequence of the great predilection evinced by the youth himself for the navy; in which he gained the most flattering promotion, and was universally beloved and respected by his brother officers.

Jane Mordaunt continued to reside in peaceful retirement, the companion and consolation of her widowed mother, till deprived of that beloved parent by the stern mandate of death.

Mr. Morland had, soon after the return of the late Mrs. Mordaunt to England, endeavoured to interest the heart of Walmer in the fate of his niece: but firm to his determination, the latter had

never been prevailed on to see her; the most he did, was to send her occasionally a small sum of money, to assist her in the poverty to which she was then reduced; but this never exceeded twenty pounds at the utmost. Parsimonious as he had become, this appeared more than sufficient to add to Mrs. Mordaunt's income, in order to enable her to live with prudent economy.

The remainder of her history the reader is already acquainted with, as well as the circumstance of her daughter being afterwards, at the intercession of Morland, permitted to become an inmate of her uncle's mansion at Beechen Grove, where we left her, happy in the conviction that she had won the regard of her deceased mother's only surviving relation. That Mr. Walmer

was anxious for her happiness, she could not doubt; and she was particularly rejoiced at the influence she had gained, by the means it afforded her of offering that protection to her beloved Julia, which that friend now stood so much in need of.

Mr. Morland, when fully informed of the proceedings at Beechen Grove, was really astonished at the uncommon generosity of Mr. Walmer, who had extended his liberality to his niece so far, as to invite her young friend to share with her the asylum his roof could afford them.

Even as the guardian of Julia Denningham, Mr. Morland could not be displeased with her hasty removal from the Ashfords: it would, he owned, have

been highly improper for her to continue with one so vulgar and illiberal as Mrs. Ashford, independent of the vile conduct of her husband.

Satisfied with this approbation, Julia was for a time more happy than she had been since the death of Mrs. Mordaunt. Rejoiced to find herself once more blessed with the society of her beloved Jane, she forgot her recent affliction; and in the hope of soon seeing her aunt, all her former vivacity was again visible in the gaiety and playfulness of her manners, when she joined her friend in the kind endeavour to rouse the drooping spirits of the amiable recluse, the aged Walmer.

Mrs. Denningham had now been absent much above a year, and no ac-

counts of her proceedings had been received for the last six months: this was singular; for she had explicitly said in her last letter, that she then intended to return immediately to England.

Upon inquiry, Mr. Morland found that every ship had arrived safe from Jamaica since that period; and yet, neither Mrs. Denningham, nor any tidings of her, had reached her family.

Unwilling to augment the painful suspense of Julia, he would not mention his fears for the safety of her aunt, notwithstanding the serious alarm he could not avoid feeling on her account, since the arrival of the last fleet from the West Indies.

To add to the distressing perplexity

of Morland, about a month after Julia had been at Beechen Grove, a letter had been received from Henry Mordaunt, which stated, that Mrs. Denningham must have quitted Jamaica; for, after every inquiry, he could not trace her out.

A vague account was given, by which it appeared, she had left that island full four months at least; that no one had seen her, since that period, when, after every preparation for the voyage home, she had taken leave of the few people she knew there, as intending to return to England. One of her acquaintance had seen her on board previous to her departure, but the vessel in which she had engaged her passage did not leave the port immediately, as had been expected.

The son and daughter of the people, at whose house Mrs. Denningham had lodged, informed Henry, that the man servant, who had come with her, had died of the fever soon after he had landed at Kingston; but that the female attendant had accompanied her mistress, when she left their house. Their own father and mother, these young people said, were both gone since to England. This was all the information Henry Mordaunt could then gather relating to Mrs. Denningham.

In his researches, he had not omitted to call on Mr. Danvers, the agent, who assured him, he knew nothing of that lady's proceedings after she had concluded the sale of her estates to him. He then produced the papers, signed by Mrs. Denningham herself, which

fully proved her agreement to his becoming the purchaser of her property. These documents were all legally signed and witnessed.

Danvers expressed the utmost surprise and dismay, when informed that she was yet absent from England. He deeply lamented, that it had not been in his power to see her on board, as he had intended. When she left the island, he was confined to his house from severe indisposition; but he knew a person who had seen her off, apparently in excellent health and spirits.

Mr. Danvers very readily assisted his visitor in making every possible inquiry into this singular business; but neither could gain any other information, than

has been already stated, as given by Henry to his sister and Morland.

With every testimony of respect for the memory of Mrs. Denningham, Danvers lamented the probability of her having perished on her return home. It was, he said, certain she left the island; and since she had not reached England, it was to be feared, that either the vessel had been lost in which she embarked, or she had fallen sick, and died on her passage: this latter suggestion he seemed to think most probable.

Pleased with the polite manners of Mr. Danvers, and the apparent interest he took in all that concerned Mrs. Denningham, Henry Mordaunt, depending

on the repeated promises of that gentleman to continue his inquiries, left Jamaica. His duty would not allow him to be long on shore, though stationed near that island, satisfied with the friendly professions of Danvers, that he would not fail to transmit to him, and to the family of Mrs. Denningham, any tidings that might in future reach him relative to her fate.

Still indefatigable in his search, Henry, after he had taken leave of Mr. Danvers, succeeded in gaining the name of the merchantman in which Mrs. Denningham had embarked. This was an unexpected piece of good fortune, which neither he nor the agent had before been able to obtain: for the young woman and her brother, who

had given what intelligence they could to Henry, alleged that owing to their being from home at the time Mrs. Denningham left their father's house, they could not give the name of the vessel or the owner; and unfortunately, their parents were just gone from Jamaica to England, and of course could not be expected back for many months at least.

Henry Mordaunt wrote off immediately to his friend Morland, hoping that, having at length gained this important clew to the strange mystery, which seemed to envelope the fate of Mrs. Denningham, something might yet be traced out; for as Morland would now have the name of the ship, and that of the owner, who was still in England,

surely he could positively learn if that lamented and amiable woman had indeed died on her way homeward.

The advice of Henry Mr. Morland did not fail to follow: he set off directly for Bristol, where he heard, that Mr. Anderson, the captain of the merchantman, resided; and after much inquiry, he had an interview with the person he had been directed to seek out. By him Morland was informed, that Mrs. Denningham had, as was stated, come on board; but that, from a delay which had prevented their sailing immediately, she had again gone on shore, taking with her a small trunk, in which were her papers and cash, as he had himself heard her say: this she was desired by a friend of hers, not to leave on board during her absence. She had told him, (that

is captain Anderson), that she would return again the next morning, but she had never arrived, nor could he find out where she was; and being obliged to sail at the time appointed, he could gain no information of his expected passenger, who had disappeared so strangely.

This extraordinary circumstance convinced Mr. Morland, that Mrs. Denningham had been purposely detained by some designing person, who had hitherto eluded the vigilant inquiries of Henry Mordaunt, and had probably imprisoned their lamented friend, after having robbed her of the money and other valuables she was known to have with her.

Notwithstanding the fair professions

of the specious Danvers, the suspicions of Morland fell on this agent of Mrs. Denningham, who had never stood very high in his estimation, as to integrity of character.

Upon investigating the business still further, these suspicions were strengthened, if not wholly justified; for Mr. Anderson positively declared, that a negro woman, who came with the lady to accompany Mrs. Denningham on shore, was, to his certain knowledge, a slave belonging to Danvers; but who the lady was, he could not say, never having seen her before.

Upon this, Morland inquired how Danvers was esteemed on the island, and how he had so very suddenly enriched himself, as to be able to purchase

so valuable an estate, as that he had lately bought of his former employer.

On suspicions being hinted by Morland, that all had not gone on fairly, and that the whole circumstance should be legally investigated, Anderson confessed, that Danvers bore an infamous character throughout the whole of the island. It was generally known he had amassed all his wealth since he had been an agent for the Denninghams, and it was rumoured, not to have been gained in the most justifiable manner, but of that none could speak openly; for from his great riches he possessed an unusual influence over the inhabitants, who feared to displease him, his vindictive temper being well known.

According to the prevalent opinion,

Mr. Anderson said, that Danvers was allowed to be "one who would stick at nothing to gain his own ends."

Morland was advised to proceed cautiously in the affair; for should Mrs. Denningham be in reality, as was suspected, completely in the power of Danvers, her life might be endangered, by permitting that wretch to know he was in the least suspected or watched. In this case, he would but too probably put his helpless victim to death, in order that she might not be rescued, and his villany thus proved upon him. The papers being all legally signed and witnessed, which were now in his possession, he could not be deprived of the estates and slaves upon it: the whole of Mrs. Denningham's property must remain his.

This Mr. Morland was aware of, but he was most anxious for the safety of Mrs. Denningham herself. If she were in the power of Danvers, the worst was to be feared. Perhaps, before any thing effectual could be done against him, she might be sacrificed by that avaricious miscreant, into whose custody she had been unhappily betrayed.

Morland wrote off immediately to Henry Mordaunt, entreated him to proceed with caution, and, on no account, to allow Danvers to know they suspected him. The name of the negro woman should be inquired out, he said, as it might lead to a further discovery of the plot; by bribing her, she might be induced to tell the name of the lady who had accompanied Mrs. Denningham from the ship. This method of pro-

ceeding thus secretly would, he added, be fully justified, since the very existence of that much valued friend was actually at stake, and all hope of tracing out Mrs. Denningham, by means of her own attendants, was now banished, by the certain information of the death of *one*, and the probability that the *other* had shared the unhappy fate of her worthy mistress.

Henry Mordaunt had, in his letters to his sister, said as little as possible of his fears respecting the lamented object of their search; and entreated her to be careful how she mentioned the circumstances he related to her friend Julia. Morland had been equally careful to avoid giving her any unnecessary alarm, and to let her know as little as possible of the melancholy news he had lately re-

ceived. Yet wishing to prepare the mind of his ward, in some degree, for the worst, he told her, that it was in vain to hope to see her aunt as soon as she had expected, for it was most probable she had been detained by some unforeseen event, after she had taken her passage home, and had been unfortunately obliged to postpone her return till the next fleet should sail for England. In the mean time, he assured her, she should not want a friend or a home to go to; for he would, with Henry Mordaunt, exert himself to the utmost in her favour, and that of her aunt. Jane Mordaunt, he knew, would be happy to have her remain at Beechen Grove, till they should know more respecting Mrs. Denningham. "She must," he said, "comfort herself in the society of that amiable friend, and

in the hope of seeing her own absent brother, who was expected soon from India."

Six months more were thus passed away, and no tidings either from Charles Denningham or his aunt arrived. Henry had been hitherto unsuccessful, and no satisfactory intelligence could be gained from his inquiries; the same painful uncertainty preyed on the mind of Julia; she could no longer doubt, that some dreadful calamity had befallen her aunt. She insisted on knowing every particular, which had come to the knowledge of Mr. Morland or Henry; for even the most distressing certainty was better to be endured than the agonizing torture of suspense. This she could bear with more fortitude than the ever changing fears, the continual

alarm she had so long experienced. Nothing could be more trying, than the misery she felt, while daily conjecturing the probable fate of one so beloved as Mrs. Denningham.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE Mr. Morland left Bristol, after his interview with Anderson, the latter delivered to his care the trunks which he had taken on board, belonging to Mrs. Denningham and her female attendant. These were immediately forwarded to the Priory, and suffered to remain there, without informing Julia that they had been received; but now that she was fully apprised by her guardian of every circumstance which had come to his knowledge, he did not scruple to tell her of his having received these packages of Mr. Anderson, and where he had sent them.

Julia, hoping by something contained in the trunks, that a clew might be given them to trace out the present abode of her aunt, prevailed on Mr. Morland to allow her to go to the Priory, and examine the contents of the luggage belonging to Mrs. Denningham. Jane, she knew, would with pleasure accompany her, and they should then both feel satisfied, that all had been done on their part towards a discovery of her aunt's mysterious absence.

Having obtained his consent, the two friends proceeded, without delay, to Westcombe, promising to be again at Beechen Grove within a fortnight; for Mr. Walmer was unwilling to part with his niece for any great length of time; and nothing but his partiality to Julia

could have induced him to grant her permission to leave him.

The Priory had been left to the care of the old housekeeper, and other trusty servants, who had been long in the confidence of their mistress and Julia.

Mr. Morland, expecting the speedy return of the former, had not attempted to let the mansion, or any part of the estate, which had been reserved for the use of the family, not being authorised by Mrs. Denningham. He had suffered it to remain in the charge of those she had left there for that purpose. She had been now absent a year and a half, and he debated with himself how to act: he had supposed, that Charles would have arrived by this time, and to him he should refer the disposal

of the property belonging to his aunt; for to Charles it more properly belonged to arrange the management of these estates; since they would devolve to him, in case of the death of Mrs. Denningham, he being the next heir to the domains of the Priory.

Before Julia and her friend arrived at Westcombe, Mr. Morland had informed the housekeeper of the death of her nephew, and that her mistress had intended to return to England before, but had been unexpectedly detained. He did not think proper to relate all that he suspected; but still continued to encourage the domestics with the hope of seeing her again, and that soon.

As the chaise drove up to the door, all the inhabitants of the Priory hast-

ened to meet their "dear young lady," and to lament her hard fate and their own, in having been so long disappointed of seeing Mrs. Denningham.

Poor old Dawson blended her lamentations for the loss of her nephew with the sincere gratulations of welcome with which she received Julia, who needed not this aggravation of her affliction to add to the deep melancholy, that was impressed on her mind by the recollection of the many months that had elapsed since her beloved aunt had presided in that venerable mansion, which had, from her childhood, been the favourite residence of that lamented relative. Tears streamed from her eyes as she entered the little breakfast parlour, and her attention was caught by the various surrounding objects, which each

so powerfully reminded her of *her* who was still so far distant. This apartment, being one of the summer rooms, had not been used when she and Jane had been at the Priory for a few weeks previous to her going to Mrs. Brudenell's. All seemed to remain the same as when her aunt had left it; the work-basket, the netting which Mrs. Denningham had begun and left unfinished, still lay on the table; a note that had been received from Mrs. Mordaunt lay beside it, partly open.

Julia perceived these interesting relics of those so dear to her heart; she unfolded the note, and, nearly blinded by her tears, gazed in heart-rending anguish on the well known characters within. "The hand that had traced them, now moulders in the grave,"

thought Julia; "the kind preceptress of my childhood is lost to me for ever. Dear, dear Mrs. Mordaunt! I have not even you left, to console me in my misery."

Then reverting to the cruel fate of Mrs. Denningham, she sobbed convulsively, overcome with the excess of her emotion. "Oh! aunt, dearest aunt, have I no hope of seeing you again? am I thus deprived of all I most love on Earth? can nothing be done to rescue you from unspeakable sufferings?" exclaimed the lovely girl, with pathetic energy, as she surveyed the small portrait of Mrs. Denningham, which hung over the mantelpiece. This apartment had been recently fitted up by her, and was rather a favourite room, from its being near the flower garden, which it

overlooked. Julia opened the glass door, and proceeded towards the conservatory, which her aunt had been accustomed to attend herself, being remarkably fond of plants. There Jane Mordaunt followed our disconsolate heroine, who, unconscious of whither she was straying, had, as if involuntarily, bent her way towards this scene of former amusement to her and her beloved aunt, who would frequently spend whole hours in the culture of her exotics, when the weather would not permit of her usual rambles in the vicinity of the Priory.

Jane had, with the kind consideration of an affectionate sister, been engaged in giving the necessary orders to the domestics. She knew how unfit Julia was, in the present state of her mind, to

act for herself, as mistress of the mansion they were now in: the task, therefore, she thought ought to devolve on her. She gratefully remembered the kind exertions of her friend towards her, when, by the deepest affliction, she most required consolation and assistance.

As the ladies entered the conservatory, old Matthew approached from a distant part of the garden, where he had been at work.

"Welcome, ladies, welcome to the Priory; though it is but a sorry welcome here, now madam is away. You will find none here but heavy hearts, as sad as your own, dear ladies; but there is a Providence in all things: she will, I trust, come once more among us; but

the Lord's will be done. We can only hope and pray for the best; *howsomdever*, it is rather disheartening like: here have we been expecting and expecting for above a year, and I was so proud of the plants that madam left me to tend: they are now grown almost too big for the pots she set 'em in with her own precious hands; but I could not have the heart to move 'em: seeming to me, it would not be right," said the poor old man, deeming it too sacrilegious to alter the arrangements, that his mistress had herself made respecting the plants in question, which came particularly under her province to superintend.

"Would you please, Miss Julia and Miss Jane, to walk this way?" said Matthew; "may be, you would like

just to look at them," said he, leading the way to where he had placed the choicest of Mrs. Denningham's exotics, from which he gathered a few of the flowers, and arranging them in two pretty, simple bouquets, he presented first one to Julia, and then another to her friend.

Our heroine gazed mournfully on the flowers, pressed them to her bosom, and sighed deeply: the tears fell on the blossoms, and glistened among their fragrant buds, as she bent over them to inhale their sweetness.

"Dear miss, they are very sweet, ar'nt they? but don't cry so over them. I hope, before the rest of the blossoms are all faded, dear madam will be here to see them, and then, miss, we shall

have *smiles* instead of *tears*," said he, perceiving that Julia was weeping.

"But there is no saying, miss. I remember, when those very trees budded last spring, I comforted myself with the same hope; but then I have been disappointed after all, worse luck!"

This simple but honest acknowledgment of his grief was painfully felt by Julia. Those very trees, she thought, might, perhaps, bud again and even again, and yet not bloom for her aunt. She might, but too probably, never witness their beauty, or breathe the fragrance of their blossoms.

In melancholy contemplation she returned to the house; and, in order to banish, as far as possible, unavailing re-

gret, she busied herself for a time with Jane, in arranging every thing for their short residence at the Priory.

The key of the closet, in which Mrs. Denningham's trunks had been deposited, was mislaid, or overlooked among the number the housekeeper had under her care. Impatient as Julia was to explore the contents of these different packages, this trivial circumstance occasioned not a little disappointment in her state of anxiety. It was not till the following day, that the key was found: this being effected, Julia lost no time before she began the search. Assisted by Jane and the housekeeper, she opened the locks, and carefully examined the contents of each box. Amidst a great quantity of linen and various articles of dress, only a very few papers were

found, and these all on indifferent subjects only.

This last hope of our poor heroine was thus frustrated, and no clew could be given, by which Henry might trace out Mrs. Denningham. Dejected and hopeless, she knew not what next to do, in order to alleviate her present state of suspense.

Julia, after repeatedly turning over and opening every fold of the linen, replaced the clothes in the trunks. She had nearly completed her mournful task, when, in folding one of the dresses, she thought she felt something in one of the inner folds like a pocket-book. Breathless with anxiety, she once more opened and shook the gown: in doing this, the tablets of an old pocket-book

fell from the sleeve in which it had been carefully placed. "Now," thought Julia, "I shall surely find something in this relating to my aunt." She knew Mrs. Denningham was accustomed to make notes of any particularly interesting events.

Jane, in anxious silence, waited the perusal of the tablets, which Julia had eagerly seized, and continued to read with the most scrupulous attention; but no passage appeared sufficiently clear to enable her to comprehend the entire meaning. Each memorandum evidently related solely to the agreement between the writer and Danvers, relative to the sale of the West-India property. The name of the agent occurred frequently, but only in trivial circumstances: nor

could it in reason be expected otherwise; for had our heroine considered, it was highly improbable she should, in any thing contained in her aunt's luggage, find out the least clew to an explanation of her detention in the island, which was subsequent to the trunks being sent from shore.

"You had better, however," said Jane, "take care of the tablets, for they at least contain the copy of an agreement between your aunt and that detested being Danvers. Mr. Morland may find it of some service; for if he cannot prove the payment of the money, he can have no right to the estate. This, I know, is not the most important consideration *now*, but it may be most essential to you in *future*," said she, fearing

that Julia might neglect preserving even this trivial proof of the claims of Mrs. Denningham.

"Talk not to me of my own interest, dear Jane," said Julia; "while the fate of my aunt is doubtful, I am careless of what may befall me. What will riches avail me, if deprived of her, and that too by the most cruel treachery ever devised?"

She burst into tears, and for some moments gave way to the bitter regret of disappointed hope. Presenting the tablets to Jane, she begged her to peruse them carefully, and give her opinion, if any remarks there written could be of service in elucidating the probable fate of Mrs. Denningham.

Jane readily obeyed; and pondering over every line, came to one memorandum which peculiarly struck her mind. Her shudder of horror did not escape her friend, who earnestly entreated to hear the reason of such evident emotion.

"It cannot be possible? It is surely too diabolical, even for Danvers himself to be guilty of such premeditated cruelty!" said she.

"Oh! in pity's sake, speak: tell me all you think, all you dread. I entreat you, conceal nothing from me," exclaimed Julia, grasping the hand of her friend.

"On reading this passage," said Jane, pointing out the memorandum to Julia, "a thought has struck me, that your

dear aunt has been inveigled into the power of Danvers, and, to prevent all discovery of his plot, he has removed her to a distance from his own residence, to this place here described by your aunt herself. Read that description of the cave in the woods, and tell me if you do not think it likely he has secreted her there. Remote as it is, it would well suit his purpose of concealment: it is known but to one human being except himself."

Julia read the notes pointed out, and, with a shriek of agony, fell senseless into the arms of her companion. It was some moments before she recovered; and then, as if lost in profound and melancholy reverie, she seemed quite unconscious of what passed. Suddenly,

as from a dream, she awoke to a sense of her real situation.

"Dear Jane, let us instantly send for Mr. Morland: he must lose no time, but write to Henry," said the lovely mourner. "I can no longer doubt my poor aunt is at this very time immured in that dreadful cave, which she has here so clearly described, as occasionally used for the punishment of slaves."

The cave alluded to was described by Mrs. Denningham as situated in the midst of an immense wood. The entrance, she remarked, was entirely concealed, by being artfully covered with the ruins of a hut, so as to give it the appearance of entire desolation; and no human foot had for a length of time

trodden this forsaken and dreary retreat.

Mr. Danvers had, among other natural curiosities on the estate, shown Mrs. Denningham this stupendous cavern, which extended some way through the solid rock, the small fissures in which served to light the dreary depth below, and to supply it with air, so as to render it habitable. Immense trees shaded the summit, and waved their dark foliage over the yawning chasms, partially concealing them from the view.

There, in this abode of horror, Mrs. Denningham observed, that Mr. Danvers had occasionally confined such slaves as had incurred his particular displeasure. To this place they were conducted blindfolded, that the secret

might the better be kept from all but the slave-driver or master, who superintended their work. This man had lived for many years with Danvers, and was a willing accomplice in all his cruelties.

This remark, and the horror at such barbarity, were expressed by Mrs. Denningham at the conclusion of her account of the subterranean prison, to which the name of the Alligator had been given, from the resemblance of the broken chasm in the very summit of the rock to the jaws of that destructive animal.

Mr. Morland agreed, that, in all probability, this cave was the prison of their ill-fated friend. The only method of investigating the truth of this supposition was, by sending to Henry Mor-

daunt, and describing the interior of this secluded retreat, the situation of which could be pretty well identified by the description in Mrs. Denningham's pocket-book, from which a copy could be taken for him.

This plan being adopted, fearful that one letter might not reach Henry, the precaution was taken to send another by a different vessel, lest by any chance either should be lost, and thus render all their arrangements for the emancipation of Mrs. Denningham of no avail.

This being effected, Julia, and Jane Mordaunt, after the fortnight was expired which they had to pass at Westcombe, again took leave of their friends at the Priory and its neighbourhood, and proceeded to Beechen Grove, some-

what cheered by the hope that Henry, being still at Jamaica, or stationed at no great distance from that island, might be able to continue his researches, till he should succeed in finding Mrs. Denningham.

Mr. Walmer received them with heartfelt delight, and agreed with Julia, that the probability was great, that Danvers had made use of the cavern in the rock as a place of concealment for his wretched victim; for he could rely on the security of such a prison, of which all his people were ignorant but the vile accomplice of his enormities.

Previous to her departure from the Priory, and during her last confidential interview with her guardian, Julia had persisted in the necessity there was of

her endeavouring to support herself in the world, independent of her friends at Beechen Grove. She represented to Mr. Morland, how extremely uncertain it was when her aunt would return to England, and her brother was still absent. This consideration had induced her, upon mature deliberation, to take the step she proposed; for, in case of the death of Charles Denningham, the property he was to inherit at Westcombe would fall to a very distant branch of the family, if he died without an heir. She then, as his sister only, could claim no provision, and she must, of course, be obliged to provide for herself; as the very small sum Mrs. Denningham had left for her use would soon be expended, unless she adopted some certain mode of support.

The untimely fate of her aunt had awakened the fears of Julia for the safety of her brother, and forced on her mind the contemplation of her own desolate condition, should she be unfortunately deprived of both her most beloved and esteemed relatives. A forethought and prudence even beyond her years was the consequence of her late severe trials. Her education had qualified her for the task of instruction, and she was prepared to meet the hardships and difficulties she knew she should have to encounter in a state of dependence: these, she hoped, she could submit to with becoming fortitude.

As no recent news had been received from India, relative to Charles Denning-

ham, and it was already some time since he had led them to expect him in England, Mr. Morland could not but acknowledge the prudence of Julia's intentions. It was possible, that circumstances of no great import might have occasioned this delay; but again, it was by no means certain, that the contrary was not the cause. Sickness, or any other equally distressing calamity, might have befallen him, since they had last heard of him. This was not improbable, however unwillingly Morland yielded to the belief of any evil having menaced the welfare of his former beloved pupil. But the fate of Mrs. Denningham had made him, as well as Julia, fearful of the events, which the future should disclose to them.

"But why," he thought, "should

Julia quit her friends at the Grove? Surely there she is well received. Why should that dear child throw herself on the mercy of the wide world, exposed to all the misery of dependence?"

Had he had himself sufficient to ensure a future provision for his ward, he would gladly have bestowed it on her; but the very small stipend allowed him as curate was not more than sufficient for his own maintenance, and with his life that pittance would cease altogether. He should have nothing to bequeath at his death; for early in life he had been led on with the hope of obtaining a considerable living; but his patron, to whose son he had been tutor, either could not, or purposely failed in performing his promise; and the worthy Morland retired from the higher

station of life he had once moved in, to the obscure and humble avocation of a country curate in a remote part of the north of Devon.

The integrity and noble disinterestedness of Mrs. Denningham led her to cultivate the acquaintance of the amiable Morland. They had for many years lived on the most friendly terms of neighbourly intimacy. From her high opinion of him, Mrs. Denningham particularly rejoiced when her nephew was placed by his guardian, sir George Alvington, under the tuition of her friend the curate, to whose judicious care she afterwards attributed the great proficiency which Charles had made in the attainment of literary knowledge, and in the many amiable qualifications, which

so much distinguished his character at a later period of his life.

This amiable youth was uncommonly attached to the kind preceptor, who, by *example* as well as *precept*, had formed his mind to virtuous principles, and a steady regard of his religious duty.

Laura had been too heedless, and too much a spoiled child of indulgence, duly to appreciate the merits of Morland. She considered him as a "mere country parson, and pedantic schoolmaster," as she expressed herself, when describing him as one of their rustic neighbours, to her more gay, but far less polished acquaintance in town; for in manners as well as mind Morland

was ever the perfect gentleman, though generally more sedate than those, whose society the thoughtless Laura so much preferred.

Julia, on the contrary, received his well-meant advice with unfeigned gratitude. She saw and felt the friendly interest that worthy man took in the happiness of their family, and infinitely preferred being placed under his guardianship, to that of any other of her aunt's acquaintance. She knew, that, in the absence of that dear relation, she could rely upon the friendship of Morland: he would be her most disinterested adviser in case of difficulty; and this expectation he had since realized, by the persevering exertions he had lately made to restore Mrs. Denningham to

her family. After due reflection, he consented to what Julia had proposed; but still did not feel convinced of the necessity to quit Beechen Grove: nor would she at first acknowledge the whole of her objection to remaining there.

Mr. Morland perceived she hesitated much when he questioned her on that subject, and at length succeeded in gaining an avowal of the whole truth; which was, that Mrs. Ashford had maliciously spread a report, that Julia had an intention "to wheedle the old man out of his property," to the injury of his niece; and that she had hopes he might, at his death, leave her the whole of his immense wealth.

"Indeed the girl is artful enough,"

said Mrs. Ashford to one of her female acquaintance. "She may intend to secure her wishes, by inducing old Walmer to marry her: his money will make him acceptable to one who has not a penny to help herself."

She then ran on a long account of the *intrigue* she had detected in her own house, between that "vile hussy," (meaning Julia) and her own scapegrace husband, whose wits that artful girl had turned by her scandalous coquettish airs.

This, and similar conversation, had come to the knowledge of our heroine, which made her firm in her resolution to quit her present residence, in spite of the entreaties of Jane, to turn a deaf ear to

all the malicious reports, which had been circulated against her.

"Nothing," she urged, "that could be said, was of sufficient importance to drive her from the protection of those who so highly esteemed her, as she and her uncle both did. Such petty malice deserved only her contempt."

But Jane argued in vain; Julia unfortunately thought otherwise. She felt that appearances were against her: she had become not only a visitor at the house of Mr. Walmer, but had been compelled to take up her abode there, as if one of the family. This, to those not well acquainted with her peculiar situation, destitute as she was of the protection of her own maternal home

and relatives, must appear singular; the extreme parsimony and eccentricity of the owner of Beechen Grove having long been the topic of ridicule and animadversion.

If any remarks were now made on the improvement in the household of "the old miser" since his niece and Julia had lived with him, the village gossips would exclaim, with upraised hands, and eyes full of wonder: "Well, what the thoughts of a young wife will do! It has really warmed the heart of the niggardly old Walmer; and he is new furnishing the rooms too. Oh, no doubt the wedding will be soon: the bridegroom *seventy*, and the bride *seventeen*—a charming match truly! But then the money,—the money is the bait

for which young miss has been angling; and he has a well-filled purse, every one knows, and she too, a sly baggage."

Then another of the sisterhood would rejoin, in the whining accents of affected pity: "Ah ma'am, it is a shame, a downright shame, to come here and take the bread out of people's mouths, as one may say: it is a burning sin to be so deceitful. That poor thing Miss Jane, the old man's niece, will be completely cut out by her pretended friend. The Lord defend me from such a canting hypocrite!" said the withered damsel who spoke; and who had been herself impatiently waiting the death of her relation whose house she kept, and whose family she would not allow to come near him, lest they should come

in for a share of the pelf, the whole of which she hoped by her stratagems to inherit.

Now had this gossiping been confined to the lower classes only, (who are ever fond of the marvellous, and too apt to take the wrong side of an argument,) Julia would not have heeded it: but this was not the case; for many of the genteeler families entertained equally ungenerous suspicions; and the motive of her very long visit at the Grove was frequently the theme of conversation at the different tea-tables of even the most polite and fashionable of their neighbours.

Mr. Walmer strongly urged our heroine to resign the intention of going out in the world as she proposed. He re-

presented, in the most energetic manner, the insults, the ingratitude of those, who, from the superiority of their wealth, judged they had a right to tyrannize over those who unhappily were obliged to be their dependents. But at length, finding Julia was bent on her determination, he contented himself with enforcing a promise, that should she find herself at any time uncomfortably situated, she would immediately return to the Grove, where, he assured her, she should ever find a most cordial welcome.

CHAPTER III.

HAVING but few acquaintance, Julia thought the most certain and speedy method of obtaining a situation in a family was to advertise, as she had observed many other young women of genteel connections and good education did frequently. She was successful in having many applications, but some would not suit her plans. Two only appeared in the least desirable; one of these she had to fix on, but which to prefer she was at a loss to determine. All offers of that kind she considered as a perfect lottery, where, for one that was valuable, perhaps twenty were every thing the contrary.

Consulting with Jane Mordaunt, she at length, at all events, determined to make trial of that which seemed to promise the fairest. Upon farther explanation, her terms were accepted; and the necessary recommendation on each side being received, it was settled, that in less than a fortnight, Julia was to proceed into Cambridgeshire, where the family she was engaged to resided.

Our heroine knew but little of that part of the country, and felt at first some reluctance to go so far from all her friends and acquaintance, to a place she had never seen, and among entire strangers. Yet this objection was so weak and childish, that Julia would not for a moment think of resigning her intention on such very trivial difficulties.

She began very diligently to arrange her wardrobe, and to prepare for the journey; and, assisted by Jane, she soon accomplished her task. Thus employed, the few days she had to remain passed rapidly on, and, with an aching heart, and uncommon depression of spirits, poor Julia took leave of Mr. Walmer, who joined with his niece in regret at her departure, and in his earnest entreaties, that she would return to them, in case she could not be happy in Cambridgeshire, or should her health prevent her continuing her arduous task.

Jane Mordaunt accompanied her young friend to Bath, whence the latter was to proceed by the stage. On their way thither, Julia assured Jane, that

no disgust at the slander of the neighbours at the Grove should have induced her to quit it, unless she had been convinced, in the present uncertain state of affairs, that it was her most prudent plan.

That affectionate girl feared, that Julia had been led to imagine, from the parsimony still prevalent in Mr. Walmer's domestic economy, that she was not welcome at his house; and this fear had added not a little to the grief she felt at parting with her beloved Julia.

Not ten minutes after they reached the inn, the coach drove up to take in the different passengers; and the two friends, embracing for the last time, and weeping bitterly at this much-dreaded

separation, repeated their professions of unalterable affection, and promises to write frequently.

The waiter again entered the little parlour where they had been waiting the arrival of the stage, and said, "Ladies, the coachman waits; all the other passengers are in; all's ready, I believe, ladies. Your luggage is in the boot, ma'am," said he, turning to Julia, who had, till this moment, forgot she had any with her, so engrossed was she with grief at quitting Jane: besides, our young heroine had never before travelled unattended, and was wholly unaccustomed to go by the stage.

Paying the waiter for his civil, but unwelcome summons, Julia grasped the hand of Jane almost convulsively, and,

in a voice inarticulate from her emotion, bade her beloved friend farewell. Drawing her veil over her eyes to conceal the traces of her grief from the bystanders, who waited to see the coach off, she advanced with trembling haste; and assisted by the proffered arm of the coachman, who stood with the door open, she stepped into the carriage, and was again bidding adieu to her almost heart-broken companion, when the stage drove off, and she was whirled with all possible rapidity out of sight of that tenderly affectionate girl.

Still closely veiled, Julia continued unmindful of where she was, and unconscious that she was remarked by the other passengers, till one of them, addressing her, inquired if she preferred sitting with her back to the horses, and

obligingly offered to change places with her.

Julia accepted his offer; and, pleased with the appearance of the young woman whom he addressed as his sister, and by whom she sat, our youthful traveller entered into conversation with these two agreeable companions. She the more willingly did this, from the hope that she might be the better enabled to withdraw her attention from the cause of her recent regret, which yet cast an oppressive gloom over her mind.

Observations on the roads, and the gentlemen's seats they passed in their way, in part occupied the time for the first hour or two after they left Bath,

Notwithstanding her utmost efforts, while listening to the interesting remarks of the young man, or the friendly attentions of his sister, the mild blue eyes of Julia were frequently suffused with tears, which nothing but the thickness of her veil could have concealed from observation. The unbidden sigh heaved her anguished bosom, while she vainly struggled to overcome her feelings, and appear cheerful and amused.

The other passengers had been for some time fast asleep, till awoke by a sudden jolt of the vehicle, as it passed rapidly over a piece of uneven ground. Then, for the first time opening their eyes, they ventured to look round, and inquire where they were; how far they had come; and several other questions:

and then, casting a glance of blended curiosity and pity on our heroine, the old lady thus addressed her:—

"May I make so bold as to ask you where you are going, miss? Shall we have your company all the way to *Lunnun?*"

"Yes, ma'am," replied Julia, "I intend to go all the way."

"I suppose you have friends in town, miss?" said the husband of the old lady. "It is a great pity you should have to travel alone, such a young woman as you seem, (though I have not seen your face;) yet I think you must be very young," added he, evidently wishing to get a look at the features of his young fellow traveller,

which the folds of her veil completely hid from his little prying eyes.

"I am going beyond London, sir; I have no friends in town at present," observed Julia.

"Then I trust in God's name you won't think of staying there any time. It is a bad place, a very bad place, for young women who have no friends: but should you be inclined, you may command my services, or those of my good woman there. I would not for the world you should come to any harm. I have children of my own that I have been obliged to leave; and I trust, the help I am willing to offer you will be returned to them should they need it."

"Ah! it went near to break my

heart," said his wife, "when I left my boy and girl at Jamaica. Poor things! I would give the world this moment to know they are doing well. It is now almost five months since we parted, and will be many more before we meet again."

At these words, she put her handkerchief to her eyes; and, as if ashamed of her weakness, attempted to laugh at the folly she was guilty of, in grieving at the absence of her children.

"From Jamaica did you say? May I ask if you know such a person as a Mr. Danvers, of Kingston?" asked Julia, with great earnestness.

"Know him! yes, that I do," said

Mr. Hanham, for that was the name of the old gentleman who had been so communicative. "But I hope he is no friend of yours, miss; for a greater rascal never trod shoe leather. He has, I well know, made his fortune by robbing the people who employed him as their agent. There was a worthy gentlewoman, a Mrs. Denningham, who, by the way, was at my house; and I fear he has played the rogue most desperately there. She disappeared very strangely; and some say she never did reach England again, though she went on board the vessel all in readiness. But a slave of that fellow Danvers has confessed the good lady was afterwards enticed on shore, and was taken, by his order, no one knows where. Poor soul! she lodged at our house, and *I* was one to

see her on board the Nelson. Anderson and I were old friends; he was the captain, miss."

"Lord, miss, you are ill I fear. How you tremble! do let me throw back your veil," said his wife, at the same moment letting down the window of the coach on that side next to Julia, whilst the other female passenger offered her smelling-bottle, fearing the lovely girl would entirely sink under the faintness, which had so suddenly oppressed her delicate frame.

"Thank you, I am better now. I am extremely sorry I have alarmed you: the heat has rather overcome me," said Julia, putting back her veil, and leaning towards the window as if for air, but, in fact, to conceal her agitation

from the rest of the travellers. Her pallid look and tearful eyes excited the compassion of all, but of none more truly than the young man, who had resigned his place for her at the commencement of their journey.

As they proceeded slowly up a very steep hill, he advised our heroine to get out and walk, and try if the air and exercise would recover her; for, as he observed, she appeared very much indisposed. His sister joined in his entreaties, and good-naturedly declared, "it would be a charity to themselves and the poor horses to alight for a few minutes, while the poor animals crept tediously up that tremendous high hill."

Finding the young lady was willing to accompany her, Julia consented, and

accepted the arm of her brother, to enable her to proceed up the steep, which extended a considerable way. Refreshed by the coolness of the evening breeze, she found herself better; and summoning all her fortitude, she determined to struggle with her feelings, and, if possible, appear composed, although her poor heart ached with anguish, as she called to mind the certainty that her beloved aunt was actually in the power of such a wretch as the execrable Danvers!

The casual remarks she had just heard were confirmation sure to all her forebodings of threatened danger. Julia shuddered with horror, as she conjectured what might be the present sufferings and the future evils of her aunt's luckless destiny.

By this time, the coach had reached the top of the hill, and the weary animals who drew it had rested for a few moments from their laborious task. When the passengers were warned, that they had better resume their former seats in the vehicle, Julia, declaring she was much better for her walk, rallied her dejected spirits; and, in a more cheerful tone of voice, thanked her companions for their kind assistance, without which, she owned she could never have proceeded so far.

When all were again seated, Julia ardently wished, yet dreaded to make any farther inquiries respecting her poor suffering aunt; but, fearing to discover her affinity to Mrs. Denningham, which she by no means wished to do to perfect strangers, she thought it prudent to be cautious in what she said or asked.

Julia, however, found some difficulty in again introducing the subject. For some reason, which she could not at that moment surmise, the communicative old gentleman had become remarkably guarded in his conversation, and purposely evaded all further inquiries.

A wink and a push from the old lady, when her husband attempted to answer any question relative to the disappearance of Mrs. Denningham, convinced our heroine, that she had cautioned him not to say any more on that affair. She had probably given him a lecture to that intent, while they had been left alone in the coach: and this we will own to the reader was the fact; for Mrs. Hanham had observed the very great agitation of Julia, while Mr. Hanham was relating the circumstance of Mr. Dan-

vers being supposed a party concerned in the sudden disappearance of their late lodger.

Now the good old lady took it into her head, that her young fellow-traveller (Julia) was, perhaps, related to Danvers; and, in consequence, extremely shocked at hearing him thus accused, and that too in so public a manner. Should this be the case, she might inform her kinsman of all they had said, and thus rouse him up to injure them or their children, whom they had left on the island where he lived.

Wealthy as Danvers was, it would be in his power to ruin their whole family; and he would not scruple to do so, if he by any means were informed of their accusations. They had already had

ample proofs of his vindictive wrath, when opposed even in trivial matters.

In reply to these very shrewd remarks, the old man promised to be more on his guard the rest of the way. "But however, wife, I must say I think you are wrong for once," said he. "That pretty young woman looks too innocent and too good to be akin to that rascally fellow Danvers. Take my word for it, she is no more his relation than I am: she is more like to be one belonging to that worthy pleasant old gentlewoman he has made away with: I should not be surprised to hear that, wife; but I will, as you say, for the sake of our children, be more careful. I have no mind 'to burn my tongue in another man's broth,' as the saying is."

The conversation for some time turned on the different adventures Mr. Hanham and his lady had met with since their return from the West Indies, and the object of their present visit to their native country.

Julia understood from their discourse, that they had been into Wales to see their relations, and were now proceeding to London, where Mr. Hanham had business to transact previous to their quitting England.

Mrs. Hanham took particular delight in recounting their late perils by land and water, and entertained all present with a description of her danger of being lost in coming over; while her husband laughed at the very exaggerated accounts she gave of their voyage.

"I did say I never would go on the water again," said Mrs. Hanham; "but I was obliged; though we went round by Gloucester into Wales, yet we came back a different way, to my great sorrow. But my husband, ladies, would not have it so, and *men* are so *positive;* no offence, my dear," said she, smiling on the fat good man who sat beside her, screwing up his mouth, as if wishing to laugh, and, at the same time, pretending he did not dare to give way to his mirth.

"Well, ladies, as I was saying, we did not come back by way of Gloucester, but crossed the Severn by the new Passage; and the Lord bless me, ladies, I shall never forget it: why, the boat they took us in was no more than a cockle-shell! It was a mercy we did

not all go to the bottom. O! it was so rough, so very rough! I thought surely we should all be drowned," said she, casting up her eyes with a piteous expression, and shuddering as she thought of the danger she had escaped.

At this her husband burst out into an immoderate fit of laughter, which lasted for some minutes, without interruption; at last, his lady thinking probably he had laughed long enough at her expense; put her hand over his mouth, and bade him not make himself so ridiculous.

"Now you know it was a very rough passage; now was'nt it very rough, Hanham?" said she, rather earnestly, but yet with perfect good humour.

"No, you could not have had a better, if you had picked it;" replied Hanham, and thus the subject ended. Feeling himself rather sleepy and weary, the old man slouched his hat over his eyes, leaned back in the coach, and soon fell into a most profound nap, which continued, at least, for an hour or two. Mrs. Hanham did not follow his example, but amused herself in again passing over in mind the perils she had encountered. Julia occasionally conversed with the other passengers, who continued their endeavours to make the journey as agreeable as was in their power, by their polite attentions, and the very amusing anecdotes they related.

Mr. Hanham had indulged in his comfortable nap, unmolested, for a long

space of time, when his more wakeful spouse, leaning forward, and giving him a push, and a tap on his head, exclaimed, "Now it was very rough, wasn't it, Hanham? it was a very rough passage," said she, in a high shrill tone of voice.

"Could not have had a better if you had picked it, my dear!" replied the old man, in a gruff low voice, his head nodding on his bosom, too oppressed by sleep to look up. His ear had, however, true to its duty, echoed back the well-known accents of his lady's tongue; while his other senses appeared "steeped in forgetfulness;" except, indeed, of the last subject of debate, and this he answered as if mechanically.

Several times during the night, Mrs. Hanham repeated the same question,

and was sure to hear the same reply, to the no small diversion of the young man and his sister. Even Julia, the poor forlorn Julia, could not forbear smiling at this concise and singular dialogue; especially, when at stopping to change horses, the driver came to the coach door, to beg the accustomed donation. Among the rest, Mr. Hanham was asked for his shilling; but still, nearly lost in sleep, he thought it was his wife who addressed him. "Could not have had a better if you had picked it," said he, composing himself again as well as he could. This reply occasioned a general laugh, not even Mrs. Hanham could forbear joining in.

"Sir!" said the coachman, greatly surprised, "you have not given me one yet, good or bad. I have not had a six-

pence of your money," added he rather surlily, thinking poor Hanham meant to cheat him of his fee, by pretending he had already paid.

But the old man was too fast asleep to heed his answer, and Mrs. Hanham, laughing at the mistake, gave Coachy a shilling, for which she received his very best bow, shutting to the door with a bang, which might almost have awakened the dead. The new coachman then drove off with spirit, leaving his passengers to settle themselves as well as they could for the night.

Early the following morning, our travellers arrived in London; and Julia, to her great vexation, found she could not proceed immediately on her journey, owing to the late hour at which the

Cambridge stage left town. This unpleasant circumstance would compel our heroine to remain a whole day at the inn, which, to so young and delicate a female, was particularly distressing, unaccustomed as she had hitherto been to travel unprotected. Her present distress was, however, much lessened, on being informed, that Mr. and Mrs. Hanham meant to continue there till the evening; and both good-naturedly offered to accompany her to the coach office. Mr. Hanham very judiciously observed, that it would not look well for her to go alone, and the protection of him and his wife would secure her from the impertinence, she might otherwise be liable to meet with.

Julia thankfully accepted their civilities, and, in the absence of the young

man and his sister before mentioned, went to the coach-office with the Hanhams, where she found her polite fellow travellers, who had just been to have their own names entered; and, to her great surprise, Julia found her name was likewise put down, and the fare paid. This kind attention of the young man excited the attention of old Hanham: he said, "It might be all very good and fine, and all that; but it might not, after all, be out of pure civility;" and cautioned our heroine not to accept of such services. The old man felt uncommonly interested for the youth and apparent innocence of Julia, and feared her simplicity, so amiable in itself, might be taken advantage of, to lead her into danger. He did not know, that the lovely girl he thus befriended was the niece of that Mrs. Denningham, whose

fate he so deeply deplored, or he would have been still more anxious for her safety. Mr. Hanham had not (by mere chance only) been informed of her name, nor had he seen it on the books at the office; but she was young and ignorant of the ways of the world, and this was a sufficient appeal to the compassionate heart of the worthy old man.

Julia heard his admonitions, to be on her guard against the young man before alluded to, with the utmost astonishment; for she had attributed the attentions of the latter to a mere wish to oblige: she now felt terrified, and dreaded she knew not what, since the mysterious warnings and surmises of Mr. Hanham. She resolved to be guided

by his advice, and not to receive any more civilities on the part of her companions, than she could possibly help. She was almost grieved, that either of them was going on with her into Cambridgeshire.

On returning to the inn, she found the young man and his sister there before her: she politely thanked them for their kindness to her, and, at the same time, offered to repay the former for the fare he had just paid on her account; this he at first declined, and wished her, at least, to defer paying it till she came to the end of the journey. A look full of meaning from Mr. Hanham made Julia more determined to settle her debt *then*, in preference to any *future* time; and the young man, fearing by the very

embarrassed air and serious manner of our heroine, that he had unconsciously offended her, no longer persisted in refusing to take the money. He felt evidently much mortified at the change he perceived in the deportment of his fair fellow traveller: he continued the whole day extremely reserved towards the Hanhams, who, he justly suspected, had insinuated something to his or his sister's disadvantage. The time however passed as agreeably as circumstances could admit; and at seven in the evening Julia resumed her journey. Mr. and Mrs. Hanham would not leave her, till she and her luggage were safely disposed of in the Cambridge mail; and then, wishing her every blessing, they took their leave, and proceeded into the city to meet their relations.

Nothing material occurred till the following morning, when Julia remarked the very singular appearance of the country, as they approached the vicinity of March, the town near which the family resided to which she was going. One extensive marsh of rich meadow land was spread around, unbroken to the eye, either by trees, hedges, or buildings; the different portions of land being divided by wide ditches or dykes, some of which were exceedingly deep, and filled with water. In many places the whole plain was inundated, the appearance of which gave an idea of dreariness and wretchedness, which Julia had, till then, never experienced. The whole scene looked more like what she had heard of Holland, than of any part of England. This

she remarked to her fellow-travellers, Mr. Manson and his sister.

"You forget that we are now entering the *fens*," observed the former; "and those trees yonder are what are here dignified by the name of *fen oaks*," said he, smiling, and, at the same time, pointing out a long row of miserable stunted willows, which were the only kind of trees growing in the low marshy ground, through which the road ran.

"I should fear I am come into a very unhealthy situation," said Julia: "I was not aware of the nature of this part of the country, or, I believe, I should never have visited it."

"It is undoubtedly unhealthy for

strangers, who are here liable to severe attacks of the ague, which indeed even the natives cannot entirely escape. The fens are proverbially likely to give this malady; but, by proper precautions, I hope *you* will escape it!" said Miss Manson. "Do you intend to make any long stay in March?" she inquired. "My brother and I reside at Wisbeach; but as we have many acquaintance in this neighbourhood, I think it not unlikely we may meet sometimes, since your friend lives in March."

Julia said the family she was going to, she had never yet been introduced to; and acknowledged she was a perfect stranger in that part of England.

"Do you know any thing of a family of the name of Shield?" asked she, wish-

ing to know their opinion of the people she was going amongst, yet unwilling to own she was engaged as governess to their children. Pride struggled in her breast; she felt ashamed to acknowledge she was dependent. This little weakness the compassionate reader will, I hope, excuse, when they consider how high in rank the unfortunate Julia had lately been, and with what expectations she had been educated. Young, and of a timid disposition, she shrunk from the hard trial that awaited her; but a consciousness, that she was performing her duty, supported her eventually through the painful task.

"I have heard of Mr. Shield," said young Manson; "he is a very opulent farmer; his father was a butcher and grazier, and amassed a very large for-

tune, the greater part of which fell to his son, the present Mr. Shield; but he is illiterate in the extreme, and has inherited from his father the love of money. Of Mrs. Shield, I know but little, but that she is thought to resemble her husband in disposition."

"Except where her own personal expenses are concerned," said Miss Manson; "in dress she outvies all her rich neighbours, when she *does* go from home, and this distinction she is not a little vain of; she is a fine showy-looking woman, on a large scale. Mrs. Shield is said too to be of a better family than Mr. Shield, but they are neither of them tolerably genteel in manner, and are generally disliked for their arrogance and meanness."

This was but disheartening news for poor Julia, who trembled at the idea of being obliged to introduce herself to such low illiberal people: purse-proud and ignorant of all forms of genteel life, as they were represented to be, she feared they would receive her in no very gracious manner, considering her as a mere dependent.

When arrived at the town of March, she found a man servant with a chaise waiting for her; the hour being near at which the stage was expected to pass on its way to Wisbeach, twelve miles farther on that road: to which place it immediately proceeded, after setting down Julia and her luggage at the only inn the town of March could boast.

Mr. Manson and his sister took a hasty leave of our heroine, both expressing the wish, that she might visit Wisbeach before she returned to Bath.

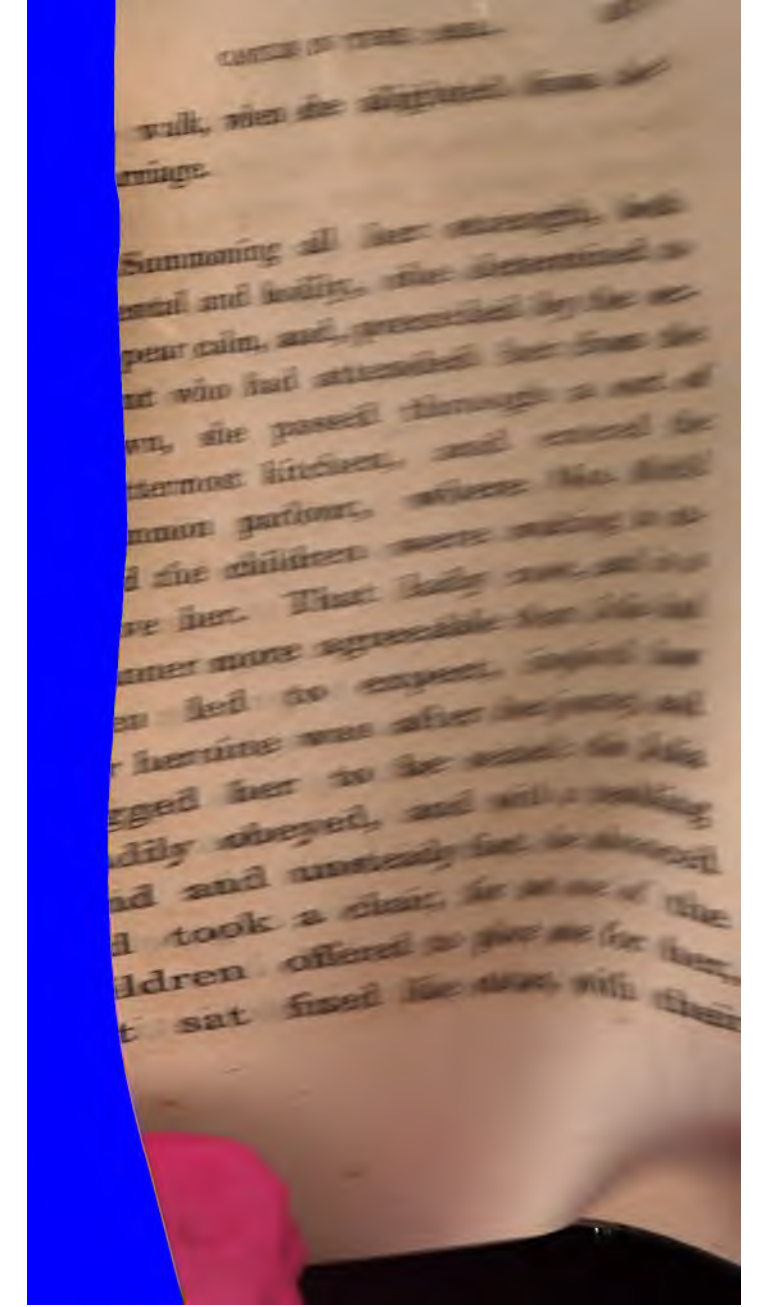
CHAPTER IV.

JULIA having arranged her dress, so as to appear to the best advantage on her arrival, set out for the Mead farm, the residence of Mr. Shield, about three miles from the town of March.

The Mead, she found, was situated in a more agreeable part of the fens, than that she had passed in her way early that morning; the country was better diversified with trees, and some few hedges instead of the dykes before mentioned. The town of March was, though small, exceedingly neat; and between that place and the Mead farm the land appeared less marshy than in

the other direction; yet there was such a dull unmeaning flatness in the scenery around, that, when compared to the bold stupendous hills of her own native country, they appeared cheerless in the extreme to Julia. Absorbed as she was by more important considerations, she could not fail to observe the total change; she heaved the deep sigh of painful regret, as she contrasted the boundless level, that now stretched before her eyes, with the romantic beauties of Westcombe.

When the chaise drove into a kind of court-yard next the house, Julia's agitation became excessive; overcome as she was by fatigue from having travelled for two nights successively, her limbs cramped, and her temples throbbing from want of rest, she scarcely felt able



eyes opened to the utmost extent, and gazing at Julia, as if they could not sufficiently satisfy their curiosity; (the eldest girl alone excepted) who, being nearly fifteen, and having been for some time at school, knew, something more than the other three, the politeness due to a stranger.

This girl was the only one who appeared to be the least civilized. Julia was quite shocked at the strange unpolished beings she had engaged to humanize. Endeavouring to put the best face on the matter, she sought to win the good-will of her little pupils by her affability and agreeable manners: for they seemed impressed with the idea, that she could not be like any other human being; but regarded her as a sort of bugbear, brought there to intimi-

date them into obedience by the utmost severity.

Mrs. Shield was, exactly as Julia had heard, far from being a gentlewoman in her language and deportment; she was, however, civil, and appeared to wish to make her new-comer as comfortable as she could. This Julia felt grateful for; but the cold stiffness of manner, which she remarked in Mrs. Shield, (the consequence of her want of good-breeding) made our heroine feel ill at ease with herself; and anxious to relieve her full heart by tears, she gladly availed herself of the proposal to retire to her own room, and look over her trunks, to see that she had all her luggage brought from the inn.

While Julia was waiting for a servant

ed to the sitting-room, where she had left them and Mrs. Shield.

The next day she was shown the apartment designed for the use of the children, as a kind of school-room. The little girls, who took her to see it, began to quarrel; for one had strewed the floor with her play-things and doll's clothes.

"Aye now," said one, "you shan't make *sich* a *litterment*, now the room is *scared* (meaning scowered); "I'll tell father af'e, and he shall give'e a *crump* of the *crown!*"

At which threat, the other, in the same elevated tone of voice, began to abuse her sister in the grossest manner; swearing, and making use of the lowest language, in spite of the interference of

their "new governess," who in vain attempted to reason with, and convince them, how shocking it was to speak in such a low disgraceful manner. They still persisted; till almost coming to blows, Julia found she must be more imperative, if she intended to subdue the spirits of these little undisciplined savages.

At dinner, the second daughter, (a girl of eleven years of age), happened to displease her father: he grew extremely violent; and regardless of the injury he might do his child, he struck her so violent a blow on the side of her head, that he literally knocked her off her chair, and she fell prostrate on the floor. The rest of the children and their mother took no notice of this harsh treatment, and seemed as if well

used to such violence, which, in fact, was the case; for they were spoiled by indulgence in some things, and in other instances unduly corrected, just as the humour of their parents influenced their conduct; for both Mr. and Mrs. Shield were exceedingly hasty and impetuous in their tempers.

Our heroine had not long been at the Mead farm, before she was convinced of the truth of all Miss Manson had stated; both Mr. and Mrs. Shield were meanly parsimonious in some things, while they were ostentatious in others. They were generally disliked, and but seldom visited, on account of the coarseness of Mr. Shield's manners, of which poor Julia was frequently a witness.

At his own table, he would tell his

adventures, when he used to go out with the butcher's tray for his father, who then kept no other boy to go of errands: the office of course fell on his son. These adventures, as may be imagined, were not of the most refined nature, and often not the most delicate.

Mrs. Shield either laughed at his vulgar stories, or heard them with silent indifference; but she rarely checked him for his free and disgusting language, notwithstanding the very visible embarrassment of Julia, whose pure mind revolted at the idea of joining in his rude mirth and excessive vulgarity.

Julia had not been long in the same house with Mrs. Shield, before she was made to feel the tyranny of that disagreeable woman: even more violent,

by far, than her husband, she was, if once displeased, a perfect demon of wrath and malice; even the most trivial offence would work her up into such a fit of passion, as to make all around her tremble; and Julia, however she strove to please, could not hope always to escape these violent attacks. The virulent tongue of Mrs. Shield never ceased; either her husband, children, or servants, must be perpetually harrassed by her never-ceasing croak of disapprobation.

It was impossible, in this ill-governed family, to polish the manners of the children, however their young preceptress might succeed in improving their minds; which, by dint of incessant assiduity, she did effect, beyond what she could have thought.

Notwithstanding the improvement of their children, which so much pleased Mr. and Mrs. Shield, they neither of them could so far overcome their leading propensity, as to allow of such books, and materials for drawing, writing, or even needle-work, as were utterly indispensable; so that Julia was obliged to supply them with her own, and this they had the meanness to allow of.

As one instance among the many of Mr. Shield's parsimony, we will give the following. In reply to a request for a few pens for the use of the children, he said, that three pens were enough to last for a quarter of a year, and more he would not allow for their writing lessons; he always had made one last

him that time, and he did not see why the *children* should not do the same.

Julia had not been above two months at the Mead, before she was seized with a most violent attack of the ague: by the suffering this malady occasioned her, Julia found her strength so much reduced, that even after it had left her, she found herself unequal to the task assigned her, and was compelled to give Mrs. Shield notice of her intention to leave them. This the latter would not at first hear of: she wished to persuade Julia to remain with her children; but when she found her determined to go from the Mead, according to the advice of her own friends, Mrs. Shield lost all command of her temper, and even threatened to *compel* her to stay.

She behaved in so insolent a manner, that our poor heroine, summoning all her spirit on the occasion, plainly told Mrs. Shield, that if she were compelled to stay, (because she had no friend near to protect her from insult and tyranny), she could never be compelled to continue her *instructions*; and at the end of the six months she was resolved to return to Bath.

Finding they could not terrify her into compliance, Mr. and Mrs. Shield joined in the most violent abuse: Julia in vain endeavoured to appease their anger, and convince them she was unable, from the state of her health, to remain where she was. In the heat of his rage Mr. Shield let fall some expressions, which convinced our heroine of what she had before only suspected,

that he had opened her last letters to Jane Mordaunt, in which she had explained the reason of her dislike to her present situation.

Indignant at this mean and cowardly behaviour, Julia positively and undisguisedly told Mr. Shield, that she was certain he had opened her letters, or he could not thus have repeated her very words, which she was not ashamed to own she had written in confidence to her friend. She asked him, if he called such conduct that of a gentleman? such a scandalous breach of common civility, she said, she would never submit to.

Mr. Shield did not disown the base action, and in part acknowledged that he had read the contents of her last letter. After this, finding Julia still more

firm in her intention of leaving them, he declared, that if she thus persisted in going, Mrs. Shield should give her no recommendation to another family, and she should go from the Mead the very next morning; not a day longer should she remain in his house: which alternative Julia chose to accept, since she had made-up her mind not to engage herself beyond the expiration of the six months, five weeks of which yet remained.

In this distressing dilemma, Julia would have been at a loss how to act, had it not been for the friendly assistance of a lady, who resided at no great distance from the Mead. Mrs. Brown had, in pity to the very forlorn situation of the young governess, noticed her, (as much as the jealous temper of Mrs.

Shield would permit), during her occasional visits to that lady.

Pleased with the elegance and simplicity of the interesting Julia, Mrs. Brown had invited her sometimes to her house; and from compassion to her sufferings, had shown her all the little attentions in her power, which the depressed spirits and impaired health of the lovely girl so much needed. She had been long apprised of her visitor's intention to quit her present abode, and had made her promise she would, previous to her return to Bath, spend a week or two with her. To this compassionate woman our heroine now applied, and received the expected request to come immediately to the residence of Mrs. Brown, and on no account to be terrified into a consent to

remain in a family where she had been so shamefully treated.

Julia very readily obeyed the welcome summons, and the next day took leave of the Shields, and proceeded directly to her friend's house, where she met with the most cordial reception.

Thankful for her present liberty, Julia that night retired to rest with a heart full of gratitude to that merciful Providence, who had thus, in the midst of strangers, raised her up a friend as a protection and consolation in the day of trouble.

The next morning she employed herself in writing to Mr. Morland and Jane. While thus engaged, two gentle-

men and a lady rode up to the house; and Mrs. Brown, perceiving their approach, hastily rose, and exclaimed with delight, "It is the Mansons I really believe! now, Miss Denningham, here is a beau for you, and an excellent young man he is; Mr. Brown and I have known him from his infancy; he is a great favourite with us both," said she: "so prepare, my love, for a conquest; put on your prettiest smile, and receive the youth graciously."

Just then the party entered the room, and Julia recognized her former acquaintance and fellow-traveller in the person of the young man, who first addressed Mrs. Brown. He was indeed the same Mr. Manson, who had accompanied our heroine on her journey from

Bath, who, with his father and sister, were now introduced to her.

"I think I have had the honour of seeing this lady not very long since," said the young man to Mrs. Brown, with a look which told how delighted he was to renew the acquaintance.

"Why, where could you have met with Miss Denningham?" inquired Mrs. Brown; "was it when you and your sister were in Bath?" said she, with some surprise.

"My brother and I travelled from Bath, some months since, with Miss Denningham; and we have frequently regretted not having met her since," said Amelia Manson, answering for her brother, who, by this time, was too much

engaged in conversation with Julia, to heed the questions of his old friend, Mrs. Brown.

"Well, good people," said his father, "when you have come to an explanation, I hope I may put in a word, and inquire after my old friend Brown, with whom I have some business to transact; and we lawyers, you know, are sparing of our words, except when paid for them. So, to cut the matter short, is Mr. Brown at home, and is he in good health?"

"He is gone to the town, where he said he should spend the day: he was quite well when he left home; and now I hope I have answered you in your own fashion."

"Good, very good; then, Mrs. Brown, you must excuse me; I must follow him without delay, for I have much to talk over with him—so good morning," said Mr. Manson.

"I hope not, if, by your own account, you mean to make him pay for every word you say to him!" replied Mrs. Brown, laughing at having detected the lawyer in departing from his own rules.

He was no sooner gone, than the rest of the party joined in a lively and interesting conversation, till Mrs. Brown left them to go and give the necessary orders in her domestic concerns: for in her very small family the arrival of two visitors, who had promised to remain at her house for the next few

days, made it indispensably necessary for her to alter the arrangement of her household.

Pleased with the winning manners of Amelia Manson, Julia confessed to her the real motive, which had induced her to visit Cambridgeshire, and the subsequent ill-treatment she had met with, while at the Mead farm.

Young Manson had noticed the change, which ill-health and unkindness had produced in the countenance of Julia, whose beautiful features were marked with such an appearance of languor and melancholy, that to even the most indifferent observer the traces of grief and care were plainly visible.

To one who admired the lovely girl

turn from their doors one so unoffending and amiable as Julia, Frederic Manson could not forbear expressing himself in terms of the utmost abhorrence whenever either were alluded to: his sister joined with him in detestation of the family our heroine had quitted; and, with her brother, strove to amuse the mind of Julia, and to rouse her from that depression of spirits, which was but too visible in her whole deportment, notwithstanding her endeavours to seem cheerful and happy.

Julia was soon convinced, by the attentions and kindness which marked the manners of young Manson toward herself, that he felt more than commonly interested for her: she could not but observe his affection; it was evident to all that Frederic loved and admired her

beyond every other being. Mrs. Brown was the first to perceive this, and rejoiced at what she considered the good fortune of her young friend: she could not for a moment imagine, that Julia would be so silly as to refuse young Manson. It was too good an offer for one in her circumstances to think of rejecting; for Frederic, independent of his pleasing address and genteel person, had a tolerably good fortune, and was brought up to a highly respectable profession.

She assured the young man, by means of his sister, that he had nothing to fear; for Julia had no other lovers in Cambridgeshire, and she had not heard her mention any one she was engaged to in Bath: indeed, she believed, she was perfectly disengaged in her affections.

But the good old lady was here too sanguine in her hopes, for Julia was, in fact, engaged in heart to Henry Mordaunt; of whom she had never spoken to Mrs. Brown. She had been thus silent from motives of delicacy; for she would not consider herself as engaged to Henry, till her acceptance of him had been sanctioned by her aunt; but he was, in fact, the lover whom, in her heart, she already preferred to every other. This was a secret known only to her dearest friend, his sister, Jane Mordaunt.

Frederic Manson, misled by the insinuations of Mrs. Brown, gladly availed himself of the opportunity now offered, to make known his sentiments to Julia, previous to her return to Bath. His father, he believed, would never be

averse to his choice: he had indeed preferred the amiable qualifications of one truly virtuous, to the advantages of wealth; for with Julia, he could not expect any fortune. But she alone, he felt, could make him happy; and friendless, unprotected, and destitute as she seemed, he yet preferred her to all the females who had hitherto attracted his notice.

When he made known his sentiments to Julia, she regretted the impossibility of returning his affection; she assured him, he should ever share her esteem, but her heart was irrevocably engaged to another, whom circumstances had for a time separated from her, and rendered it impossible to say when they should meet again; but to whose services, in regard to her family, she felt

herself bound by the ties of gratitude as well as of affection. To him, and to him only, though years should intervene before they met again, she had determined to remain constant in her preference.

"Happy man!" exclaimed Manson, "would to Heaven that I too could serve you in such a manner, as to have a similar claim on your gratitude! I have had no opportunity of proving my regard, or I would willingly resign every other wish to that of serving you, my dear Miss Denningham. Uncertain as you are of the fate of your only relation, surely you do wrong to persist in your intention of taking another situation in a family. Dear, amiable Julia, if you would but allow me to place you in independence, above the

insults of an unfeeling world! Believe me, with your delicate health, you are unable to contend with the many difficulties that threaten you, as a dependent on the caprice and ill-humour of those far beneath you in every respect, excepting only the paltry distinctions of wealth."

Julia continued firm in her determination of rejecting him; she mildly, but positively assured her unhappy lover, that it was vain to hope that time would change her resolution; she never could feel for him that affection he so well deserved. But as her friends she should ever esteem both him and his sister, whose kind attentions had won her unfeigned regard.

Mrs. Brown was at first much hurt at

the unexpected rejection of her favourite, and vainly sought to convince Julia how blind she had been to her own interest, in throwing away such good fortune, when it had thus fallen in her way.

The next morning young Manson was sent for by his father, who requested his return immediately; this summons he the more readily obeyed, as he felt uncommonly mortified at the obdurate conduct of Julia. He had been so much encouraged by Mrs. Brown to hope for success, that he did not expect so positive a refusal. Before he left our heroine, he informed her, that his father would be going to London nearly the same time she intended, in her way to Bath; and as she so much disliked to travel unattended, Mr. Manson

would be happy to take care of her, on her journey to town, if she would allow him that honour.

Julia readily accepted this proposal, which seemed much to gratify her unfortunate lover, who was aware how unpleasant it must be for such an elegant and beautiful female to be exposed to the impertinence of strangers, while travelling without a friend to protect her from the unfeeling remarks of the illiberal and vulgar.

A few days after this period, Julia was agreeably surprised by letters from her brother and Jane Mordaunt. With trembling eagerness she perused that from Charles, who had written to explain the cause of his delay in India. He had, he said, been detained there by

the dangerous illness of the gentleman who had engaged to act for him during his absence; and as he could not well entrust the duties of his office to any indifferent person, he had been compelled to relinquish the hope of being so soon in his own country, and among his beloved relations; but as his friend was fast recovering, he yet hoped to be with them in a very few months.

This was indeed a consolation to Julia, who had at least the satisfaction of knowing that her brother was safe, and worthy of all her affection: her fears on his account were all banished, and with renewed hope she anticipated the pleasure of their expected meeting.

"Jane, my beloved Jane, will now be happy;" thought Julia, as she broke the

seal of that dear friend's letter; "she will be happy in the husband of her choice; she alone is worthy to be the wife of Charles."

Jane, in her manner of addressing Julia, evinced the joy which the accounts from India had given her; she congratulated her on their brightening prospects, and strenuously urged her to return to Beechen Grove immediately, and for the future to consider it as her home, till Charles should arrive in England. She had, she said, heard from Henry, but unfortunately he had been wholly unsuccessful: Mrs. Denningham could not be traced out. Danvers had by some means been apprised of the secret inquiries made after his unhappy captive; but, notwith-

standing this disappointment, Jane said her brother was yet in hopes he should at length be more successful: he determined not to give up his researches, till he had brought that infamous wretch Danvers to justice: even if it were too late to rescue their lamented friend, he would bring her murderer to punishment for his atrocious crimes.

Jane Mordaunt, in her earnest wish to impart a share of her own happiness to her beloved Julia, had not forgotten to copy into her own letter the many tender and affectionate inquiries, which her brother had made respecting Julia; "from whom," as he said, "he had been so long, so cruelly separated." It was for her sake, he owned, that he would never cease in his endeavours to

rescue Mrs. Denningham; "for his adored Julia," he declared, "he would brave every danger."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed our heroine, "I am not friendless, I am not deserted! O Henry, dear Henry! you alone can ever be the object of my choice, bound as I am by gratitude to acknowledge your worth. O may we once again be a happy united family, blessed with the presence of my beloved aunt, blessed with her protection, her smiles of affectionate regard!"

CHAPTER V.

JULIA had been three weeks with Mrs. Brown, when she took leave of that worthy friend, and, in company with Mr. Manson, proceeded to London. Thence she continued her journey to Bath, where Jane Mordaunt waited with impatience to welcome her return, and to conduct her to the Grove. It was early in the spring, and the weather exceedingly cold, when our heroine left Cambridgeshire. This, and the fatigue of her long journey, had so worn out the little remaining strength of Julia, that she was scarcely able to express her joy, when she again beheld Jane,

who, punctual to the hour when it was said the coach would arrive, had waited at the inn in readiness to receive her friend. Julia, faint and weak, had scarcely reached the room destined for them, when she fainted in the arms of the affectionate girl, who had come full of hope and love to meet her beloved sister, (as she delighted to style our heroine). Jane bent over her in mournful silence, as she contemplated the ravages which sickness and sorrow had made in the once blooming countenance of Julia.

"Oh! Julia, Julia, what must have been your sufferings, to have produced this dreadful change?" said Jane, weeping over the unconscious girl, whose pallid features she gazed on with anguish unspeakable.

Slowly recovering from her state of insensibility, Julia wept on the bosom of Jane, more from weakness and exhaustion, than any emotion of the mind. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered, she accompanied her friend to Beechen Grove, where Mr. Walmer impatiently awaited their arrival. He would have gone with his niece to meet their young visitor, but that his health was too infirm to allow of his going from home. Julia was received by him with even more than his former cordiality: the state of weakness, to which she was reduced by her recent illness, excited the liveliest emotions of pity in the heart of Walmer.

Soothed by the kind attentions of Jane Mordaunt and her uncle, Julia had not long been at the Grove, before

she was restored to her former health and spirits, as far as circumstances would permit. She gratefully acknowledged her obligation to them both, but, at the same time, persisted in her first intention to make another trial of a situation in a family, as soon as she could hear of one likely to suit her better than the last; she might, she hoped, be more successful in a second attempt, and the same reason in a great measure now existed, which had formerly induced her to leave Mr. Walmer's residence.

Julia, by mere chance, happened to hear of a situation, (which seemed exactly to suit her wishes), in a clergyman's family, residing within a few miles of Bath, where she would be required to instruct four young ladies, who

had been always accustomed to the tuition of a governess at home.

From this Julia concluded the children must undoubtedly be perfectly genteel and well managed; she therefore lost no time, but applied to the lady herself, who was apparently much pleased with the appearance of our heroine, engaged her without further delay, and begged she would come immediately, as she was fearful the young ladies would lose time by being too long without continuing their usual lessons, and various employments for their improvement. This was cheerfully agreed to by Julia and Jane, who congratulated each other on their having secured a situation in a family residing so near Bath.

Julia, on her arrival at the rectory of Dunalverton, was politely received by Mrs. Munnington, who was a perfectly genteel and well-bred woman. On being introduced to the young ladies, she was much pleased with the gentility of their manners; the eldest was a beautiful girl of sixteen, the youngest was a pretty little lively child of about seven years of age, and the other two, who were of the intermediate ages between her and the eldest, were equally pleasing, though not both as handsome as Miss Munnington, who was particularly beautiful, but appeared delicate in health, and inclined to be consumptive; in which appearance she very much resembled her mother, but not in features; for Mrs. Munnington was plain, and had an unpleasant expression of fretfulness on her countenance, when it was

not purposely decked with smiles before company.

Mr. Munnington was an elderly man, of rather a clumsy figure, and coarse heavy looking features, which were not in themselves prepossessing; but from education, and the nature of his profession, he was tolerably genteel in his general deportment, though not remarkably polished in manners. He was besides a perfect *gourmand;* the *quantity,* more if possible than *quality,* of the dishes set before him, was greedily prized; for he would at each dinner devour as much animal food, as would feed half a dozen moderate eaters; nor was he less scrupulous with regard to the quantity of wine, with which he daily diluted the great load of provision he stored within him. The soli-

dity of his corporeal food too much engrossed his faculties to allow any of the mental kind being in the least considered. His weekly sermon at the parish church was hurried through with all possible speed, and within as short a space of time as was ever heard from any pulpit whatever. He then returned to eat his fill of some good substantial joint and a pudding; then took his accustomed nap till eight in the evening, when tea-time called him once more to the duties of repletion: and certain it was, he was never known to be so *strictly* conscientious in any other.

One Sunday, when Julia and the young ladies were at the table, and Mr. Munnington had just helped himself most plentifully from a fine piece of roast beef, word was brought, that a young

couple, who had their bans lately published, wished to be married the following morning at nine o'clock. This so excited the wrath of the worthy rector, that, flinging down the knife and fork, which was about to convey a delicious morsel to his lips, he exclaimed, with tremendous vehemence, "Zounds! what do the people mean by asking to be married so early? do they think I will leave my bed for them, and go into a cold church before I have breakfasted? Tell them I will marry them at eleven, and not before—John, tell them this, I say," said he with unusual animation in his gestures and looks. In general, it must be owned, he was inoffensive enough, and, as far as related to herself, Julia had nothing at that time to complain of; he never interfered with the management of the children, of

whom he was exceedingly fond; and he frequently amused himself in playing with the little Elizabeth, who, from being the youngest, was his pet and plaything.

Mrs. Munnington was excessively fretful and capricious, ever inventing some new plan, and never pleased with it when adopted. At one time, fearful the children would be made to do too much; at another, expressing her disapprobation that they were not taught more. Seeing but little company, and going out as seldom, her whole time was spent in finding fault with what was going on in the study, which had been appropriated to the use of Julia and the children.

As she neither read nor worked, Mrs.

Munnington had but little employment. She did nothing but invent new medicines and cures for her fancied complaints; she really injured her own health and that of her daughters, by continual doses, which were sure to be administered if one of them looked a little paler than usual; or even if a finger did but ache, it was sufficient reason to begin doctoring.

The eldest daughter, who had naturally a delicate constitution, there was, perhaps, more excuse to be made in thus nursing; but, it was probable, she was more injured than benefitted by the ill-judged treatment of her mother, whose darling she was above all the rest of the children. Extreme indulgence from her very infancy had made her a tyrant over her younger sisters;

and, like Mrs. Munnington, she was both fretful and capricious. She was not in the least under the control of Julia, though said to be placed under her tuition. Her self-conceit and ill-humour were sometimes intolerable. The other children would have been tractable enough, but for the folly of their mother: they had excellent abilities, and learnt with surprising rapidity: neither had their education been neglected; but they had not made the improvement they might, owing to her caprice and ridiculous whims. At one time they were not to read, it 'would hurt their eyes; at others, they must not work, it would make their thumbs broad: and then, to improve their shape, and to make them hold their heads well, the young ladies were to carry a footstool on their heads, with a bag of sand

in it; and this, for precisely twenty minutes, so often in the day, and then to lie down on an inclined plane for half an hour.

When Mrs. Munnington could not amuse herself with her dull taciturn husband, she would go into the study, while Julia was hearing the younger Miss Munningtons their lessons and reading, and, placing herself with her back to the fire, would continue incessantly finding fault with some trivial thing or other, till the patience of even the sweet-tempered Julia was tried almost beyond endurance.

To add to the disagreeableness of her new situation, our heroine was given to understand, that she must never expect to visit her own friends, as she could not be allowed to leave the young ladies

at any time; and what was still more unreasonable, Mrs. Munnington refused to let Julia see Jane Mordaunt when she called at the Rectory. This was too much: for one great motive in her wish to remain there was, because of its vicinity to Bath, and the hope she should be allowed sometimes to visit her friends at Beechen Grove; or at least, to see Jane when she could leave her uncle occasionally, to call on her at Mr. Munnington's.

The weather was uncommonly severe for the time of year, and the snow lay a great depth on the ground. The study overlooked the garden by means of a large Venetian window, which extended over nearly one side of the room. This Mrs. Munnington had opened every day for an hour or more, while the

children walked about in her room, instead of taking the air out of doors, which the inclement weather would not permit of. The doors were to be thrown open to give a free circulation of air through the apartment, before the young ladies returned to it to resume their employments.

While they were in their mother's chamber, Julia thought she was at liberty to retire to her own room, as it was impossible to remain where she then was, exposed, as she must be, to the excessive severity of the cold, while the study was being thus ventilated.

The second day, Mrs. Munnington desired she would not think of going to her own apartment, for fear either of the children should get into the study

in her absence, and go too near the fire. "They might," she said, "be burnt to death, owing to her not being in her *proper place.*"

Julia urged it could never be expected she should remain there, when all the windows and doors were thrown open, and that too in such a severe frost. It would be sure to give her a most violent cold, and thus incapacitate her from continuing her instructions to the Miss Munningtons. She really could not consent to do so: there was a high guard fender before the fireplace, and neither of the ladies were so very young, as not to know the danger of playing with the fire. But Mrs. Munnington would not relinquish her object; she insisted upon Julia's compliance, in spite of all she could urge to

convince her of the impracticability of obeying this selfish and unfeeling command. Finding it vain to contend the point, Julia declared she could not submit to such treatment, which would infallibly risk her own health without benefit to any one.

The perverse temper of Mrs. Munnington was irritated by this refusal. She told Julia she might leave Dunalverton as soon as her friends could be informed of her intended return to them; for she would have no one at her house, in a *dependent situation*, so mightily scrupulous of their health, as to refuse to obey her orders.

Julia, who had conducted herself in the mildest and most respectful manner, even in her firm refusal to obey Mrs. Mun-

she was not obliged to submit to her caprices for want of a home.

Just before the chaise arrived, she received a note, or rather a scrawl, from Mr. Munnington, desiring to know what was due to her. This request was expressed in the rudest and most ungenteel manner imaginable, treating her as if she were a mere servant.

Julia returned in answer, that, as she had not been the full quarter, and had unfortunately failed in giving satisfaction, she left it to his and Mrs. Munnington's discretion to decide what she should receive as a compensation for the instruction she had given their daughters.

With this note she enclosed a memo-

randum for the sum of eleven shillings and threepence, due to her for the expense of the chaise which had brought her to Dunalverton, and which they had engaged to pay for her. Had Julia consulted the dictates of her pride only, she would not have stooped to accept even her just demand upon Mrs. Munnington; but, situated as she was, it would have been the height of folly to refuse even this trifling addition to her finances; for the whole of what she had received from Mrs. Shield had been expended either in medicine during her severe illness, or in the expenses of her long journey from March to Bath.

She had yet gained nothing by her plan of being governess in a family: she had suffered both mental and bodily fatigue to very little purpose. Still she

hoped to be more fortunate in another trial; and accordingly, again advertised in the Bath papers. The applications in consequence of this she thought she might answer when at the Grove, where she meant to continue only till suited with a desirable situation.

Just before her departure, the servant brought her a folded paper, containing, not a note as she expected, with the sum due to her, but merely the *eleven shillings* and *threepence* due for the chaise-hire! Julia had not even the smallest remuneration for the two months she had been at the Rectory; such was the *liberality* of Mr. Munnington and his amiable wife. Instead of gaining by her care of the Miss Munningtons, she received nothing, and lessened by unavoidable expenses even the small sum

she took with her to Dunalverton. Too indignant at such unheard of meanness to remonstrate on the injustice of such conduct, Julia soon after left the house, disgusted at the meanness, not to say dishonesty, of its owners.

Julia, with heart-felt delight, found herself once more within the peaceful mansion of old Walmer, and with the friend of her heart, Jane Mordaunt, with whom her time was sure to pass agreeably. Thus situated, nearly a week had elapsed before our heroine had any application in reply to her advertisement; she then received two, both from families in Bath, and appointing Julia to meet them at their different houses. The first was from a lady in Edward street, and the other from a family in the Circus.

Both being in very genteel parts of the town, Julia, still sanguine in her hopes, dressed herself with peculiar neatness and elegance, wishing to appear to the best advantage in point of gentility, without being dressed too expensively to be becoming in her station.

From Mr. Walmer's ill health, Jane was not able to leave him, and, as she had intended, to accompany Julia, who was, therefore, obliged to proceed to Edward street alone.

Our heroine looked uncommonly well that morning; the air and exercise had restored the beautiful bloom to her cheek, and hope gave animation to every feature. Many who passed her remarked what a lovely interesting girl

she was; but Julia herself was too much engaged by her own thoughts, to heed the observations of others. With a palpitating heart she knocked at the door, and inquired for the lady mentioned in the note. She was rather surprised at the unceremonious manner of the servant: the fellow, with a contemptuous air, bade her walk in, and left her standing in the hall while he went to deliver her message to his mistress. He immediately returned, and asked Julia to walk up into the drawing-room, where she found the lady waiting to speak with her.

Almost petrified with astonishment at the singular object that presented itself, Julia scarcely knew whether to advance or retreat: she felt a strong inclination to the latter; but the lady, begging she

would be seated, began to converse in a very gracious manner with our poor heroine, who could scarcely conceal her extreme agitation and almost terror at the doll-like, unnatural countenance of her who addressed her. The shrivelled skin of this extraordinary being was literally *daubed* with paint, both white and red. Her large black eyes appeared frightfully extended from the high curved line of her false eye-brows; her nose was large, and filled with snuff, a profusion of which powder lay scattered on the neck-handkerchief which covered her ample bosom. Her lips were painted a bright vermilion; and her teeth, which had been lately purchased of her dentist, appeared to chatter with a quick motion, like the keys of a harpsichord, when vibrating under the light touch of the finger. To

complete this assemblage of charms, the old lady wore a wig, the regular curls of which fell in jetty ringlets round her broad full forehead: a lace cap, with a large bunch of artificial flowers, completed her head dress. The rest of her costume was equally absurd: a fine white dress, trimmed in the extreme of the mode, was contrived to be slipped over her wool-pack shape: round her neck and wrists she wore a necklace and bracelets of coral, the beads of which were of an immense size; on her feet, gay coloured slippers; and a dashing ridicule in her hand completed the costume of this antiquated belle. She reclined (as she thought, gracefully) on the really elegant couch, and supported her feet in studied elegance on the rich ottoman that was placed before her.

There was a something so indescribable in her air and manner, that made Julia compare her to one of those wretches she had heard of, who decoy young women to their houses for the most villanous purposes. She trembled as she looked at the strange creature who addressed her, and scarcely knew what answer she made to the different questions put to her with almost overstrained affability.

The old lady seemed highly pleased with Julia, and was perfectly satisfied with her in every respect. She observed, that Julia was very young: "But that," said she, "will be no kind of objection to the person I wish to engage you for. I am certain they will approve of you. Pray have you any friends who live near Bath? for the family I wish you to go

to, lives at a great distance from this place. I should take you myself to my friend, who lives in the north of England, but I wish to know first, if you have any relations here you wish to consult, before you decide on going so far from home."

To this Julia replied, that her friends lived but two miles from Bath, and she should, undoubtedly, wish to consult them, before she engaged with any family. She was, in fact, glad of an excuse to be off entering into any agreement with the old lady, who sat scrutinizing her every look.

At this declaration she was evidently much disappointed; and, after musing over her own plans for a few moments, raised some trivial objection, and said,

she feared, after all, that Julia would not exactly suit her friend. As it was, she was sorry she had given her the trouble to call, and thus dismissed her.

Delighted to get away from the odious old creature, our heroine hastily took leave, and hurried down the stairs to the hall door, which she found open; but her progress was here arrested by a tremendous storm of hail and rain: eager as she was to quit the house, she was there compelled to seek a shelter from the "pitiless pelting of the storm." Still keeping the door open, she stood just within the entrance, waiting till she could venture out. Two footmen, belonging either to the old lady (or some other lodger in the same house) came forward, and boldly looking under her bonnet, stared her full in the face; and

then grinning significantly at each other, walked off, making their remarks loud enough to be overheard by Julia.

When the storm was over, Julia was glad to find herself once more in the open street, and safe from the clutches of the old lady, whom she strongly suspected to be a person of bad character.

After having rested herself at a pastry-cook's in Milsom street, Julia went to the Circus, hoping there she might be fully compensated for her late disappointment. She was very respectfully ushered into a parlour, and her message given to the mistress of the house, who sent word that she would come to her immediately.

After waiting above half an hour, the lady appeared. She too, was excessively singular in appearance, though very different from the person Julia had just left; for she looked like one that had come out of the tombs, or else had slept for a hundred years, so extremely antiquated was she, and precise looking. Her dress was an odd jumble of shabby genteel, both in the costume of this and the last century. She was very deaf; and it was with the utmost difficulty Julia could make her comprehend, that her visit was in consequence of a note she had received, appointing her to come at that hour, to answer the application made relative to an advertisement.

This done, to the utter amazement

of our heroine, the old lady began questioning her as to her management of infants, and if she had been accustomed to "take them from the month." This being a kind of technical term among nurses, scarcely knowing what reply to make to this singular question, Julia could not at first forbear smiling, and thought there must surely be some mistake; but the old lady was too deaf to hear any explanation, and persisted in the belief, that Julia had come to her as a young woman who wished to engage herself as nurse to an infant not a month old.

The truth was, Mrs. Evade (wife of the celebrated physician, Dr. Evade) was not willing to allow she was deaf. She had, in haste, mistaken the signature

of the advertisement, and copied the initials of Julia's instead of the one below it, which was for a situation as nurse. This it was which occasioned the ludicrous mistake we have just mentioned.

It was useless to try to convince Mrs. Evade, that she came under the idea of being engaged as governess, and not as nurse. Julia could not make the lady understand her, and she still continued to run on a long string of explanations, as to what would be required when Julia should take the care of the lady's infant, for whom she wished to engage her.

In this ridiculous dilemma, two of the daughters entered the room: of them

I need say nothing; for who has not heard of the three noted Misses Evade, who have so long paraded about from one place of amusement to another, throughout the city of Bath, and who still continue in "single blessedness," notwithstanding the hopes of papa and mamma to get them all well married.

When the Misses Evade made their *entrée*, they stared at Julia, as if she had been a being of another world; and when they understood their mother's mistake, they laughed aloud, wholly regardless of the feelings of her they thus insulted, whose genteel appearance certainly claimed some sort of respect. Instead of pitying her embarrassment, they evidently enjoyed it with unfeeling levity, and never attempted to make

the least apology for the mistake which had been made.

Wishing them good morning, Julia left them to their ill-timed mirth; and weary and disgusted at the reception she had met with at Dr. Evade's, she left the Circus, and called on a lady in Gay street, to whom she had a message from Jane Mordaunt.

Here she rested herself for some time; and afterwards, at the request of that lady, accompanied her to the public auction-room in Union street, which was then a fashionable lounge.

Julia and her companion had scarcely seated themselves there, when the Misses Evade and their brother (a stupid look-

ing young man) came in after them. They no sooner perceived our heroine, than they began to titter and whisper to their brother, and others of their acquaintance, who now joined them; and Julia perceived, by all eyes being fixed on her, that she was the cause of their mirth.

This idea she could not be mistaken in, for one of the young ladies literally *pointed* her out to her brother and the rest of the party, recounting, in an audible voice, the circumstance relating to Julia, of which she gave an exaggerated description sufficiently mortifying to our poor heroine, who, distressed at the attention thus drawn upon her, prevailed on her companion to allow her to return home.

This permission she easily obtained; and she gladly returned to the Grove, where with pleasure she found herself once more safe from the impertinence of the *vulgar great.*

Never after could she walk in Bath without being thus molested, even in the public streets; for it would be a rare thing indeed, if one day should pass, (when it was possible to walk out) that the three Misses Evade should resign their practice of parading about from shop to shop, and from house to house, like the troubled spirits of some departed fashionists, who still hovered round the scenes they frequented when on earth.

The faces of the Misses Evade were s

well known as their father's carriage; but with this difference—the latter never stopped at a person's house, unless the owner were well rewarded by a fee; the *pleasure* of seeing the *former* might be had *gratis!*—Such thorough-bred idlers were the Misses Evade!

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Walmer's health became so exceedingly infirm, that Julia for the present gave up all idea of leaving Jane, who entreated her to remain with them at Beechen Grove, and assist her in attending on the poor suffering invalide, who was now incapable of amusing himself as formerly about the garden and grounds belonging to his mansion. He was now entirely dependent on her exertions, to wear away, with tolerable comfort, the weary hours of painful lassitude produced by continued suffering. His sight being too dim to avail himself of his own valuable library for amusement, Jane and Julia read to him

by turns, or accompanied each other in vocal or instrumental music. Sometimes, when better than usual in his health, the poor old man, supported between them, would venture out into the long avenue which led to the house, and from which it took its name.

As the summer advanced, Mr. Walmer proposed to change the air, and go to some place by the sea side. He fancied he might derive benefit by the change of scene; and probably the pure air from the sea might brace his debilitated frame: at all events, it would be an agreeable plan to his young attendants.

Jane and Julia eagerly embraced this opportunity to praise the salubrity of Combe and the adjacent coast, hoping to prevail on the old man to choose that

place for their intended residence for the autumn.

In this wish they were gratified. He readily consented to go into Devonshire, and gave them permission to arrange all things as soon as they pleased for their departure from the Grove; for with all the restlessness of a nervous patient, he had no sooner determined to leave his present residence, than he was impatient to commence their journey to Ilfracombe.

The young people did not give him any great trial of patience on this score; for in less than a week after the resolution had been made, he found himself comfortably seated in his easy chair in one of the prettiest cottages on the coast near Combe.

Morland was immediately informed of Mr. Walmer's arrival with his niece and Julia, and hastened to welcome the invalide to his new abode, wishing him all the benefit he so sanguinely expected to derive from the sea air, and the known salubrity of the place.

Julia had again the pleasure of beholding the friend of her poor lamented aunt; to him she explained her motive for resigning her intention of providing for herself as she had formerly wished.

Leaving Mr. Walmer to the care of his niece, in company with Mr. Morland, she walked to the Priory, which was but a moderate distance from the cottage. In those scenes of her former happiness, Julia loved to ramble, and

call to mind the many virtues of those whose absence she so deeply lamented.

The cottage, that had once been the residence of the worthy Mrs. Mordaunt, was now neglected and untenanted. The little casement, which overlooked the neatly cultivated garden, was now almost shrouded in the embowering shade of the woodbine and clematis, which threw their wildly luxuriant wreaths around in gay, but untrimmed profusion. The shrubs and flowers, the sweetness of which perfumed the evening gale, wasting "their fragrance on the desert air," were rudely scattered around, weaving their tangled branches so as to render the walk from the wicket to the cottage nearly impassable. One wilderness of sweets encompassed the

humble dwelling, now desolate and unregarded: the hand that once planted them, was now no more: the eye, that once gazed with delight on their opening beauty, was now faded in the tomb.

Julia, in mournful recollection, recalled that evening, when she had first been conscious of the love of Henry Mordaunt; an affection sanctioned by that amiable being, whom she so deeply regretted. There, beneath the casement, grew the tree, from which he had gathered the rose he then presented her: the gay blossoms, that had then bloomed on that parent stem, were now faded, gone for ever, vanished like the gay dreams of happiness, which then gilded her prospects!

"This yet remains," said Julia, as

she plucked a blooming wreath of the jessamine, whose starry blossoms of snowy whiteness yet lingered on the branch. "Henry compared this to spotless innocence," said she: "this yet remains to me; though love and happiness are blighted in the bud, yet *this* I can still call mine. O my Henry, I am sunk in fortune, in rank, since last we met; but *I* have remained unchanged, my name is still unsullied with reproach. O Henry, shall I yet be dear to you, though poor and destitute as I now am?"

Painful, yet pleasing recollections of the vows she had once heard him utter, his ardent professions of unalterable love, crowded on the mind of Julia, as she pensively collected a bouquet from the flowers which yet bloomed unfaded in

this abode of desolation. She then mournfully retraced her steps, and proceeded to the Priory, which she had previously visited, and where she had left Mr. Morland, while, unknown to him, she indulged herself in a solitary ramble to the cottage.

After an agreeable day spent at Westcombe, Julia returned thence to Mr. Walmer and Jane, who had been both anxiously expecting her, to know how she found every thing at the Priory, whither Jane would gladly have accompanied her, but that her uncle must have been left in her absence entirely to the care of servants, and this the affectionate girl would not think of in his weak state of health.

Julia, for the amusement of her

friends, told them all she had seen, and the little events that had occurred since she and Jane had left their home. Matthew and Dorcas still kept the lodge, and the old housekeeper had faithfully performed her duty at the mansion; but all had given up the hope of ever seeing Mrs. Denningham again, and bitterly lamented and wept over her melancholy fate. They now looked forward to the time when "Mr. Charles (as they called young Denningham) should come back from India, and take possession of his estates."

Under the superintendence of Mr. Morland, the Priory and the lands belonging to it had been carefully preserved in all their former beauty and cultivation, excepting the cottage of the late Mrs. Mordaunt, for which a

tenant had not been found, who chose to live in so retired a spot: and this accounted for the look of mournful solitude, which cast such a gloom over that humble abode.

Julia had not long been in the neighbourhood of Westcombe, before her comparative state of peaceful comfort was again destroyed, by the most distressing accounts from Ireland. She now was informed of the most dreadful calamity, that could have befallen her sister, lady O'Neal.

A duel, in which sir Carroll had been engaged with the infamous Kinmore, had unhappily proved fatal to the former. That rash and thoughtless young man had, within the last two years, sunk

nearly the whole of his newly-acquired fortune at the gaming-table, till he at length convicted his treacherous friend in the most nefarious practices, contrary to all laws even among professed gamesters. Irritated at his losses, and hasty and impatient in temper, sir Carroll openly accused Kinmore of his villany, making public the dishonourable means that perfidious man had used to ensure his own gain: this, of course, produced high altercation, which terminated in a challenge. The seconds were instantly named, and without further delay the gentlemen met. Kinmore was most sure in his aim, being less heated by passion: his ball penetrated the side of his adversary; the wound was mortal, and the unhappy victim of his diabolical schemes expired

in the arms of the friend, who had acted as his second.

Kinmore, a stranger to compassion, felt not the wrongs of the deceased; and apprised of his own personal danger, hastened from the spot, regardless of the horrid deed he had just perpetrated, except as it concerned his own safety. In a few hours he had left Dublin; and taking with him all the spoils he could collect, he embarked for the Continent, and had not since been heard of.

Such had been the dreadful suddenness of the event, that had for ever closed the mortal career of sir Carroll, that his gay unthinking companions could scarcely credit the melancholy tale; nor could his equally gay and dissipated

widow believe the account of his untimely death, till the bleeding body of her husband was brought home.

Then, indeed, the selfish, unprincipled Laura first felt the bitterness of grief:—then she first wakened from the dream of folly, that had hitherto employed her hours, to the awful lesson which affliction could teach even her stubborn heart; for she loved sir Carroll beyond any other being, however thoughtless she had been of the fatal consequences she might bring on him by her wanton extravagance and unbounded vanity.

Independent of her grief for the loss of an affectionate husband, lady O'Neal felt that she no longer possessed sufficient, to enable her to live even in

tolerable affluence: the little now left since the death of sir Carroll would be barely sufficient, to support her and her infant son in moderate independence.

Her relations were estranged from her by her own ingratitude and unkindness; and among the heartless throng, who had lately idolized her, no real friend could she find to console and assist her in this day of adversity.

Deeply wounded by this heart-rending reflection, the unhappy Laura wrote to her sister, explaining her wretched situation, and beseeching her to say if their aunt had been heard of, or if Charles was yet returned: at the same time hinting a wish, that she and her child could live with Julia again at the

Priory, till something could be decided for her and the infant son of sir Carroll. Still meanly selfish, it could easily be perceived, that, amid all her affliction, *self* was the leading object. Regardless of the inconvenience she might occasion others, lady O'Neal considered only her own gratification.

Not so our amiable heroine; her compassionate heart mourned over the sorrows of her sister, and the conviction of her present distress cancelled every recollection of lady O'Neal's former unkindness and unfeeling behaviour.

Julia hastened to Mr. Morland, and entreated his consent to her wish of having her sister with her at the Priory, till the return of her brother, when she was certain he would willingly agree to

receive Laura and her child as inmates of his mansion, in case Mrs. Denningham should not return to receive her, with her wonted affection, to her former peaceful home.

Mr. Morland could not see any objection to so truly benevolent a scheme; the present affliction of lady O'Neal would, he hoped, incline her to be more affectionate to her sister than she had formerly been; and for this reason, and in pity to the sufferings of the widowed Laura, he readily consented to Julia's proposal of sending for her to Westcombe immediately.

The first month of the young widow's mourning had by this time elapsed, and with it the first poignancy of her grief. Light and variable in mind, no one

object ever long engrossed her attention. Lady O'Neal began to feel it irksome in the extreme, to shut herself up from society; neither could she endure the thoughts of quitting Dublin, and going "to be buried alive in that hideous old place the Priory." She perused her sister's letter with cold indifference, though it was expressive of the utmost affection and tenderness, deploring the untimely fate of sir Carroll, and entreating her to hasten to Westcombe, where she impatiently waited to receive her and her infant.

Laura, one should have imagined, would have felt gratefully happy to avail herself of the kind and considerate plan, which Julia had, in the warmth of her heart, depicted as the most conducive to their mutual comfort. *But*

lady O'Neal had too long been the slave of fashion and of flattery, to share the pure feelings of genuine affection.

Unable to resist the request of some of her acquaintance to join them again in their gay circles, Laura consented to visit and receive company; when, as the interesting and beautiful widow, she became more than ever in vogue.

Among the most ardent admirers of lady O'Neal was an old nobleman, well known for his immense wealth, and his notorious gallantry. The beauty of the reigning belle had so smitten this noble veteran, that, regardless of his extreme parsimony in many respects, he resolved to overlook the want of wealth in the lovely widow, in consideration of her personal charms. Ridiculous as the

offer may appear to some, this noble lover waited on Laura, made known his sentiments, and moreover, engaged to make such a handsome settlement on her, that she consented to receive his lordship's visits as her accepted lover; and, in less than three months after the death of sir Carroll, his *disconsolate* widow became the bride of a man almost old enough to be her grandfather! But her ladyship was soon undeceived in her flattering hopes of outshining all her former equals: she had not been again married many weeks, before she was convinced of her error; for her jealous, suspicious husband, spite of her entreaties and tears, bore her from the gay metropolis to a lonely venerable mansion in a remote part of the country.

Not the most inveterate enemy could

have wished the hapless, but imprudent Laura, a more severe punishment for all her folly and levity, than that she now had inflicted on her. Never allowed to visit even her own natural friends and relations, she was doomed for years to drag out a weary existence, immured from all that could give her happiness; and, when at length freed from this galling yoke of slavery, her beauty, of which she had once been so vain, was vanished for ever, and even her health so impaired, as to take off all relish for the gayeties of life.

But we will now leave her, and revert to a former period, when we left her more amiable sister engaged in preparing the Priory for the reception of Laura, as the widow of sir Carroll.

To express the surprise and grief of Julia, at the unlooked for and unfeeling conduct of her sister, is next to impossible. She knew it was now past recall; and that Laura, forgetting the respect she owed to the memory of her late affectionate husband, had outraged every rule of decorum, in thus speedily consenting to become the wife of another. She knew not what plan now to adopt for herself. She again applied to Mr. Morland for advice, and he strongly urged her to continue at the Priory; as being now of age, she was fully entitled to act for herself, and for her brother during his absence, which would not, in all probability, be of much longer duration.

From the time it had been known that Laura did not intend to visit her,

Julia had insisted upon Jane Mordaunt and her uncle residing with her at the Priory for the short time they intended to continue in Devonshire; and to compensate, by their society, for the disappointment she had just experienced. This Mr. Morland seconded, and Jane joyfully acceded to.

Mr. Walmer wishing to have his niece and her young friend near him, was prevailed on to accept the hospitality of Julia, and for a time to consider himself as her visitor.

The parties were thus situated, when one evening, as Julia and Jane were both sitting at work, and conversing together in a low voice, that they might not disturb the comfortable nap of the poor invalide, they were suddenly startled by

the sound of horses' feet, as they came clattering over the pavement of the court-yard, at the back of the house. A loud ring at the bell, and the barking of the mastiff as the carriage stopped, altogether proclaimed the arrival of some stranger at this unusual hour of receiving visitors.

Mr. Walmer, roused from his sleep, and alarmed at the uproar, in a feeble debilitated voice inquired the cause of such unusual commotion. Retired as they had hitherto lived, this very simple incident struck a panic on the mind of the old man: he gazed fearfully around, not knowing what to expect, or why he was thus disturbed.

Julia was at this moment too intent on the surmise of who the stranger

might be, to heed the inquiries of Jane or her uncle; her curiosity was even painfully excited, just as the old spaniel, who had been her aunt's favourite, rushed into the room, and running hastily to his mistress, began to yelp and bark, at the same time pulling her with some violence by her gown, then retreating to the door, as if entreating her to follow him.

Julia immediately obeyed this singular summons, and descending to the entrance-hall, was met by a gentleman muffled up in a large travelling coat; his hat was slouched over his face, so that she could not recognize the features. He had just alighted from the carriage, and was proceeding toward one of the rooms immediately adjoining the vestibule, when the old spaniel, dart-

ing forward, began to whine and fondle round the feet of the stranger.

"Poor Dido, what, then, you have not forgotten your master!" said he, patting the faithful creature, and, at the same moment looking up, he perceived Julia. "My sister, my beloved Julia!" exclaimed he, extending his arms to embrace the half-fainting Julia, whose tongue refused utterance to the excess of joy and surprise, that together almost paralysed her senses.

"Dear, dear Charles!" was all that could be distinctly articulated, as she clasped her arms round the neck of her brother, and wept on his bosom, incapable of welcoming him for whom she had so often mourned, and whose kin-

dred affection she had so much stood in need of.

Supporting her in his arms, he bore her to the apartment he was about to enter, when the sight of her first arrested his attention, and banished every other thought from his mind, which had, till then, been divided between her and another dear object; that amiable and lovely girl, whom he had come to claim as his destined bride.

"Julia, dear Julia," said he, when she was recovered from her first surprise at seeing him, "where have you left Jane Mordaunt? is she with you? Dear sister, I entreat you, tell me, tell all you know of her; is she well? is she here at the Priory with you? O tell me, for I am dying with impatience to

see my own, my beloved Jane. I was told she was come with her uncle to Combe; is she there still?" inquired Charles, with great earnestness, scarce waiting to receive an answer to one question, before he asked another relative to her he loved.

"Jane is here with us at this very moment," said Julia; "but let me beg of you, dear Charles, be not too hasty; let me tell her of your arrival, and prepare her gradually for this happy meeting. Delighted as I know that dear girl will be, it may be too much for her to take her thus by surprise: I can guess by what I myself felt at the first sight of you, what will be her feelings. Shall I now go, and tell her cautiously, you are here waiting with impatience to see her?"

"Dear Julia, you are the same little good creature as ever, I see," said Charles; "go, my sweet girl, and say all, any thing you think the best in my behalf to Jane; but do not keep me long from you both. Consider, I shall be on the rack of suspense, till I receive permission to vindicate my own cause with that amiable girl, from whom I have been so long, so *very long* absent."

Julia hastened to Jane Mordaunt, and first began by telling her, that accounts had been received of Charles's safe arrival in England, and that he was then on his way to the Priory, and might be hourly expected.

"He is here, he is here, I know he is now in the house!" said Jane. "Dear Julia, your happy looks tell me Charles

is already at the Priory. O let me see him; tell me, is he here indeed? O do not deceive me with false hopes; is he really in this very house?"

"He is here, and only waits till I will introduce him to you; may I venture now to do so?" said Julia, with one of her arch playful smiles, which used so frequently, in former happy days, to brighten her intelligent countenance.

The interview of the lovers can more easily be imagined than described: I will therefore leave it entirely to the imagination of the reader to depict to himself, or herself, whichever may have perused this little narrative thus far. Should they ever have experienced the anxiety and long suffering, occasion-

ed by a delayed absence from the beloved object, they will here readily imagine the heartfelt delight, the unspeakable happiness, which Jane Mordaunt and Charles experienced, when they again were restored to each other, after five years of continual solicitude.

Should the worthy reader never have been placed in similar circumstances; or should he never have loved, he cannot hope duly to appreciate the feelings of the lovers at this unexpected interview.

In his joy at beholding Julia and Jane, Charles Denningham had not observed the absence of his aunt, for the first hour or two. He afterwards imagined, by the evasive replies he received to his inquiries after her, that

she was, probably, at the house of one of their neighbours, and would return the following morning. But afterwards finding nothing was said of expecting her at the Priory, he was clearly convinced, that something dreadful had befallen her: he entreated his sister to divulge the whole truth, and not to disguise it from him. So earnest was his manner, and so vehement his entreaties to have an explanation relative to her absence, that Julia could no longer withhold the mournful intelligence from her brother. Assisted by Jane Mordaunt, she related the cause of Mrs. Denningham's determination to go to the West Indies, and the fear they entertained of her being there imprisoned by the orders of Danvers the agent; as two years had now elapsed, since she had led them to expect her in England.

Jane brought forward all the letters she had, since that period, received from her brother, in all of which the unhappy object of his unavailing search was alluded to.

Charles Denningham had no longer any doubt, that his aunt, in all probability, was still lingering out her days in the dismal abode of a prison; perhaps too, denied the necessary comforts, which one at her advanced age required. Independent of this, "what must be the anguish she was doomed to suffer, by being denied all intelligence of those dear relatives she had left in England!"

Shocked at the dreadful mystery which yet involved the fate of Mrs. Denningham, and the misery she had already endured, Charles vowed to

bring the infamous Danvers to justice, and avenge on him the sufferings of his injured aunt.

Had it not been for this melancholy event, Charles would, at this time, have been the happiest of men. Restored to his beloved Jane, blessed with her society, and that of his favourite sister, he had but little else to wish, till the mournful tale of his aunt's absence, and unheard of calamities, had cast a gloom over his fair smiling prospect of future happiness.

Charles Denningham hastened to his old friend, the worthy Morland, and with him consulted as to what could be done in proceeding against Danvers, and obliging him to give some account of Mrs. Denningham, of whom, all agreed,

he had first taken an unfair advantage, and afterwards had detained her in his power.

Mr. Morland, overjoyed at the return of his young friend, received him with all the heart-felt cordiality of one deeply interested in his welfare, and that of his family. The good man advised Charles to wait the arrival of the next fleet; and then, if no tidings could be gained of his aunt, it would be advisable to adopt legal measures to investigate the whole business; but he warned his young friend of his fears, that little could be done for them by means of the law, in such a distressing perplexity.

Charles thanked him for his advice, and all he had already done in the service of his family, but persisted in the

intention of forcing Danvers to an explanation, and obliging him to resign his victim.

"My poor aunt has now been absent above two years, and endured the extremity of misery! and all this I have been kept ignorant of," said Charles. "Why, my kind worthy friend, why did you not let me know this distressing event? Surely, something might have been done in all this time, towards saving her from such a dreadful fate!"

Morland represented how vain it would have been to hope *he* could have rescued her: even had he been informed of her barbarous captivity, it would but have added to his grief without benefitting his aunt; and, situated as he had been, it would have been cruel to have

informed him of an evil, it was not in his power to alleviate.

Charles felt at length convinced, that all had been done which circumstances would permit. Both Morland and Henry Mordaunt had exerted themselves to the utmost, but he was grieved to find, that nothing satisfactory had yet been effected.

No letter had been received for some months from Henry, nor could his friend imagine the cause of his silence; but both Jane and Morland expected to hear of him when the fleet should arrive. In the mean time, Charles resolved to have the advice of some professional person, as to the best method of proceeding against Danvers.

Employed in this business, and in collecting all the information he could gather relative to his aunt, and the proofs he could bring forward of just suspicion against the agent, Charles continued for several days devoted to the interest of the worthy and lamented Mrs. Denningham.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Walmer had, soon after the arrival of Charles Denningham, expressed a wish to return to Beechen Grove, but had, at the earnest entreaties of Julia and her brother, relinquished his design. The old man's health had been of late so much worse, that it was judged by all but himself, that he would never again quit the Priory, till he returned to his long last home. Borne down by age and infirmity, in him the lamp of life was nearly extinguished. It was but the faint glimmering of a departing ray, that yet played about the socket, which even the faintest breath of air might annihilate for ever.

The fatigue of a long journey would, in all probability, exhaust the little remaining strength of the sufferer before he could reach his own residence; and for this reason, all agreed in urging him to continue at Westcombe.

Convinced, shortly after this, that his earthly career was at a close, Mr. Walmer requested that Charles, as well as Julia and Jane Mordaunt, should be summoned to his presence, that he might bestow on them all his blessing, before he closed his eyes in death.

The old man, supported on pillows, addressed the young people, thus assembled round his bed, with all that awful composure, which so frequently marks the character of a death-bed scene, where the sufferer departs in peace with

all mankind, and in hopes of a blessed eternity.

Walmer took the hands of Charles and Jane, and placing them in each other, told his niece, that he approved her choice, and trusted she and Charles had many *many* happy days in store for them. By his will, it would prove, that he had not been unmindful of her dutiful attentions; and that to her and her brother he had bequeathed the greater part of his property, with a considerable sum of ready money to Julia, and a legacy to each of his old servants.

After some other less important remarks, he bestowed his blessing on all present, and then dismissed them; expressed a wish to be left to sleep, as he felt quite exhausted by his late exer-

tions. On his wish being complied with, he fell into a gentle slumber, and from that sunk insensibly into the silent sleep of death.

Such a truly awful event considerably depressed the spirits of the whole party at the Priory. The benevolence of the late Mr. Walmer was gratefully acknowledged, and every respect paid to his memory, which even the nearest ties of kindred could claim.

After the funeral, Charles, who was appointed executor to the will of the deceased, found his time much engaged in superintending his affairs, and in settling the different legacies, the most considerable of which was to Julia; who, by the liberality of Mr. Walmer, now found herself possessed of a decent com-

petence, which would enable her to live in independence, if not in positive affluence.

By the will it appeared, that Beechen Grove was to be sold, and the purchase-money divided between Jane and her brother: this, together with a large sum of money in the funds, made an ample provision for both. It was evident, by the distribution of his property at his death, that Mr. Walmer wished to make all the amends in his power for the harsh severity with which he had treated the late Mrs. Mordaunt; to her children he made up for the parsimony which had influenced him in his conduct to their mother.

About two months after the death of

Mr. Walmer, when Charles had nearly completed his task as executor to that worthy old man's last bequest, and time was again allowed him to consider his own more immediate concerns, he became apprised of the intention of Jane Mordaunt to quit Westcombe. She had before mentioned this to Julia, and urged the peculiarity of her situation; being, as she then was, under the same roof with her lover; indeed, living in his own mansion, without the sanction of any female relation residing with them, excepting Julia, who was herself too young to do away the objection of her continuing at the Priory.

Jane had, at the entreaty of Julia, consented to prolong her visit for a week or two, and then was to return to

Bath, where she meant to board with a lady with whom she had been acquainted during the life-time of Mr. Walmer.

Charles had not yet urged his claim to his betrothed bride, convinced, that under the present circumstances, she would not second his wishes; and, satisfied with her promise of continuing some little time longer at the Priory, he gave up his own views of happiness for the present, and anxiously awaited the arrival of the fleet from the Windward Islands, which had been unusually delayed, it was supposed, by the late heavy gales and tempestuous weather. It was to be feared, that several of the merchant vessels from the West Indies had either been wrecked or taken into foreign ports.

The coast on the north of Devon has ever been remarked for the number of wrecks, which happen there during the winter months; and the inhabitants of the small towns by the seaside were formerly stigmatised with the character of brutal rapacity, and of being barbarously ferocious in quest of the booty they sometimes found along the coast; or in plundering the wrecks and the wretched beings, who had been cast upon their inhospitable shores.

Of late years, it must be owned, this conduct has not been so generally prevalent, though by no means unheard of even at the present day, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of the principal landholders to suppress such inhuman practices.

One evening in the month of October, our amiable trio at the Priory were alarmed at the violence of the tempest which raged around. It seemed to shake the massive walls of the venerable mansion to its very foundation; notwithstanding its sheltered situation in the deep glen between the hills inland, and the cliffs on the side toward the sea; which, alternately broken, and towering in lofty majesty, either opened the view to a small portion of the watery waste, or screened the building from the keen blasts, which swept along the coast.

"What a dreadful storm!" exclaimed Julia; "did you hear that tremendous crash?" said she to her brother, as he stood at the old deep-seated window, which looked toward the sea side.

"Did you see that flash of lightning?" inquired Jane. "Do not stand quite so near the window; the bright light has nearly blinded *me* already."

"That peal of thunder seemed to shake the very rocks themselves," said Julia. "How dreadful it must be to be out such a night as this. I tremble at the very idea of the danger the poor creatures at sea must now be exposed to. Charles, has any one been to the old tower? the look-out I mean?"

"I have been myself, but there was no vessel in sight, except a Combe pilot-boat, gone out, I suppose, to bring in any ship that may be in distress. They will be all on the look-out such a night as this: they can now make their own terms," observed Charles.

"Sir," said a servant, who just then ıtered in great haste, "sir, Tim Brad- y, the bailiff's son, has just come from ıe tower, as you have ordered him, and e says, he has seen a large vessel a few ıiles down channel, and she seems to e in great distress. She has but one ıil left, and that, God help the poor ɔuls on board of her, is now of no use ɔ them, for the wind blows fresh upon he shore, and we are all afeard she will ;o upon the rocks."

At this moment, the deep awful ound of a distant firing convinced all ɔresent, that the vessel alluded to was n reality in great distress. The heavy, noaning sound of the minute guns told n undoubted language the danger which menaced the hapless mariners; whose last hope was this sad, mournful

appeal to their more fortunate brethren on shore.

Again the hollow sound murmured along the vale at stated intervals: sometimes but faintly heard above the raging of the winds, that howled dismally around; at others rising in a full and heart-appalling swell, which smote on the ear like some sad funereal dirge. Not unheard or unheeded did its solemn notes appeal to the inhabitants of the Priory, who came crowding in to beg their master's permission to run off directly to Combe, and send out a pilot-boat to the assistance of the wreck, if such a precaution had not already been taken for the safety of the ship's crew.

One of the domestics was sent off with all possible speed, and another ac-

companied their master and Tim Bradley to the old tower on the cliff, whence they could make signals to the vessel then in sight (when the vivid flashes, which broke at intervals over the ocean, enabled them to discern the situation of the wreck).

Charles and his attendants, each with a torch, proceeded to the look-out, as a signal, that they had heard the appeal to their compassion, and that assistance would be speedily sent.

The vessel had approached nearer the coast; it was, indeed, much to be feared, she would be dashed to pieces on the rocks, that lay in every direction far out into the Channel. The tide was coming in full upon the shore, and the wind raged with frightful violence:

there was scarce a possibility of approaching the wreck, so dreadful was the surf that broke over her.

No common boats could venture out, and nothing but the most daring hardihood, and real knowledge of the coast, could hope to contend with the danger, that menaced all who went to the assistance of the ship's crew; for as to saving the vessel itself, it was next to impracticable.

The pilot-boat, which had been seen off in the distance, succeeded in nearing the wreck, and finding it impossible to bring her off, (for she had at that instant struck upon a rock) they attempted to bring off as many of the crew as it was possible to crowd into the long-boat.

Scarcely had this been effected, before the last remaining mast fell with a tremendous crash, and threatened to sink the remainder of the shattered wreck, which, swinging round with the vibration of the blow, seemed as it were dizzy with the shock. The whitened surf dashed over it in wild fury, throwing on high its wreaths of snowy foam, which, contrasted with the dark depth below, served but to add to the horrors of its terrific blackness, as it yawned fearfully around, expecting the promised victims of its wrath.

Even the stoutest heart might be appalled to witness such a scene of awful grandeur, as the whole of the coast at that hour presented. Another vessel came in sight, which had more success-

fully weathered the gale, and yet contended with the roaring element, which heaved its tremendous billows around in ungovernable rage, lashing their foamy crests against the rugged crags that rose above the briny flood.

Keeping clear of the coast, this second vessel, which appeared to be a merchantman belonging to the expected fleet, was safely piloted into a small but secure harbour near, there to remain till the following day.

All attempts to rescue the remaining crew and passengers on board the wreck had proved fruitless: it was given up by all as impracticable; and the wretched beings were left to all the horrors of their dreadful fate: for, un-

less they could stand out the present storm, they had not the least chance of being rescued from a watery grave.

A constant watch was kept up through the night, lest the wreck should be dashed to pieces among the rocks on which it had struck. It was possible, that some of the bodies might be cast on shore, and, by timely assistance, might also be saved from the devouring jaws of Death.

Contrary to the expectations of the people on the coast, the wreck did not go to pieces, but remained stationary amid the labyrinth of rocks, on which it had at first struck.

At the dawn of day the storm abated, and hopes were entertained of bringing

off the crew, if the vessel could hold out for another hour or two: but, as yet, the surf ran so high, that no boat could approach, though many had made the attempt, in consequence of the high reward offered by Mr. Denningham, and several other gentlemen in the neighbourhood. But convinced, at length, of the danger which menaced such an endeavour, they thought they were not justified in risking the lives of so many, upon the almost certain failure of their expedition.

As the morning advanced, the sky became clear and serene; but the ocean, yet ruffled by the effects of the storm, bore traces of the violence with which it had raged the preceding night. A hollow moan echoed through the cliffs, as the troubled waters beat against

their rugged sides in one continued sheet of foam. The billows still heaved on high their tossing crests, and, like the impatient frowardness of infancy, would not be hushed to rest, though all around was calm and tranquillity itself, compared with the horrors of the past night.

Upon the beach lay scattered in every direction fragments of the rigging washed from the wrecks, which had sunk during the storm. Chests, casks, and other remains of their cargo, which had been thrown overboard, strewed the way, together with different articles of clothing, which had belonged to those hapless beings who had perished.

Charles (or Mr. Denningham, as we shall henceforward style him) had not

retired to rest during the whole of the night. He left the Priory at an early hour, and, proceeding to the seashore, gave orders for a boat to be got ready, as he was determined to lose no more time, but while the calm allowed, to try and get off those yet on board the wreck: he would himself, he said, accompany the men in this hazardous undertaking.

Scarcely had he left the shore, when Jane and Julia reached the old tower, whence they could command the view of all that passed on the beach below, and at the wreck which lay beyond. The tide was fast ebbing, when the boat pushed off, which bore Charles and his brave comrades to the relief of the sufferers. The distance was not great to the wreck, but a heavy sea continually

broke over it, which greatly added to the difficulty of giving the assistance so much needed.

Julia and Jane, almost petrified with horror at the peril which Charles had thus daringly braved, stood too much appalled with fear, to be able to speak or move. They strained their aching eyes, in a fixed and eager gaze, on the boat, which rapidly bore him from them into the midst of the boiling surf that roared around. At one instant the boat appeared to have sunk for ever from their view: a piercing shriek from Jane aroused her companion from the stupor, which apparently overpowered her.

"Oh! Julia, Julia! they are lost, they are lost!" exclaimed Jane, with frantic energy, rushing from the tower,

and hastily descending the steep winding path, that led to the beach. Julia again cast another eager glance at the spot where the boat had disappeared, and, in an instant after, she saw it rise again as from the deep, and borne aloft on the aspiring waves, which seemed in mockery to play in wild succession against the fragile bark.

Julia, missing her friend, hastened to the beach in search of her, and to assure her their fears were happily not realized as yet, for Charles and his companions were safe from the peril which they had witnessed from the tower.

When Julia had reached the stony level beneath the cliffs, she looked in vain for Jane Mordaunt. Two or three fishermen, who stood near, told her that

a young lady had rushed hastily past them, and entered a small cottage at some little distance off; here Julia followed her, and found the unhappy girl in a state of insensibility. The poor woman, wife to one of the fishermen, was busily engaged in chafing her hands and temples, when our heroine entered the hut.

"Jane, my dearest Jane, they are safe; I have seen them again, I have indeed, Jane!" said Julia, with the soothing accents of pity and affection, as she vainly attempted to call the unhappy sufferer to some sense of what passed around her. It was some time before they could recover her, so great had been the shock she had received at the supposed death of her unfortunate lover.

When Jane was sufficiently restored to a sense of her real situation, she insisted upon accompanying Julia to the beach, there to wait the arrival of the boat; for neither of the friends could think of returning to the Priory, while Charles was exposed to such imminent danger.

Perceiving that one boat had reached the wreck in safety, others went out to join in their endeavours to bring off the crew and passengers.

The first had succeeded already, and the second was shortly after equally successful. All eyes were bent on these interesting objects as they came to the shore: the first reached it in perfect safety, and Charles Denningham was once more restored to the two lovely

beings, who had so anxiously watched him through this dangerous exploit.

But scarcely had they time to congratulate him on his success, when a loud shout from the sailors, who had just landed, and the distant cries of distress, called the attention of all to the fate of the other boat, which, being guided by less skilful hands, had at that instant upset, and every soul on board of her sunk to rise no more; at least, such was the opinion of the by-standers at that awful moment. A dead silence prevailed for an instant, even among the most hardy, till Mr. Denningham, with his usual presence of mind, ordered off another boat in hopes of saving some of the bodies, which might otherwise be washed out to sea; for as the tide was then going out, there was no probability

of its bringing any of the poor sufferers on shore.

While the men were preparing to obey these orders, a man was seen at some distance off, buffeting with the waves, and endeavouring to swim towards the shore, while he with difficulty supported a fellow sufferer in one arm; this encumbrance greatly impeded his progress, and it was feared by all, that he could never bear up against the waves, even till the boat should reach him. The others, who had been brought off, had, on their first landing, been taken to the different huts nearest the beach, more dead than alive from the exertions of the past night; exhausted and worn out with fatigue, they had scarcely strength left to drag their weary frames to this haven of rest.

Mr. Denningham had given orders that provision, and every assistance they should find requisite, should be speedily supplied, and nothing spared which could add to their comfort.

Just as the boat approached the unhappy beings, who had been seen from the shore, they sunk, unable to continue the arduous struggle for life: fortunately, as one of the bodies rose again, the men in the boat succeeded in saving it, and were returning rapidly to the shore, when a female form was seen floating on the waters at no great distance. This also they got on board, and rowed with all possible speed back to the beach, where the tenants and domestics belonging to Mr. Denningham waited to administer the necessary relief in cases of

suspended animation, where the vital spark was not quite extinct.

On the bodies being landed, that of the female was taken to the Priory immediately; and the young man, who was evidently still living, though senseless, was placed on the beach, supported by the sailors, who had so lately rescued him from a watery grave.

In their endeavours to restore him to animation, they had loosened the dress about his throat and chest; in doing this, a miniature was discovered suspended round his neck; the ribbon which fastened it was broken, and, unperceived by every one present, it fell to the ground, as they raised up the youth to bear him to the adjacent cottage.

ılia and Jane Mordaunt, rejoicing
two, at least, had been saved from
number who had been lost in the
nd boat, were now returning to the
ry, to offer that assistance which
unhappy female so much needed;
had already, at their request, been
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ds, thrown up during the night, Julia
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foot, to see what it could be which
ne so uncommonly brilliant, she ob-
ved, to her great astonishment, a
niature!

Hastily stooping to pick up the prize,
ich she had no doubt belonged to

the same young man, she had, from a distance, seen borne to the cottage,) she found, to her indescribable amazement, that it was the very miniature of herself, which she had formerly given to Jane Mordaunt; and which, unknown to our heroine, Jane had given to her brother when he left England.

"Surely it cannot be!" exclaimed Julia, pale with agitation as she vaguely surmised the truth; "and yet it looks so like the one I gave you, Jane: I never had any other miniature of myself," said she, still half doubting the reality of what she beheld.

"O my brother, my poor brother!" exclaimed Jane, without heeding Julia's consternation, and wildly pointing to the hut where the young man had been

taken. "It is, it must be my brother, our dear, dear Henry! he alone could have that picture," said she, looking eagerly at the miniature for an instant, and then, seizing Julia hastily by the arm, she begged her, with imploring earnestness, to go with her to the cottage.

At that moment the door of the hut was opened, and the young man, as if in the most violent paroxysm of frenzy, rushed out, followed by two of the sailors; and wildly advancing to the sea, he attempted to plunge in among the waves, but was fortunately prevented by his companions.

"Talk not to me of danger; tell me only is she safe? has she been washed on shore? or has she already perished?

Speak, I command you, and drive me not to madness: I will seek her, I will save her, though I perish in the attempt!" said he, with wild desperation strongly depicted in every feature. His companions unfortunately could tell him nothing of the female, whose loss he deplored in all the incoherence of insanity.

Darting from the grasp of those who held him, he plunged into the sea, and was swimming off to the wreck, or in that direction where the boat had upset. In coming from it, when one of the sailors overtook the poor frenzied being, and with great difficulty brought him again on shore; exhausted by his past sufferings, and his late struggles to get free of his pursuer, he sunk down on the sand apparently dead.

Julia, who with Jane had been a spectator of this heart appalling scene, now rushed wildly toward the group who stood near him; pushing them aside, she knelt beside the dying man, and, in tones of bitterest anguish, exclaimed. "O Henry! is it thus we meet? Jane, Jane, it is indeed your brother, our own beloved Henry!" Tears streamed from her lovely eyes, as she clasped her hands in agony, while gazing on the pale features of the youth she loved.

Jane, insensible to all but the presence of her brother, wept in all the anguish of silent unspeakable grief; she pressed her lips to his, chilled as they seemed in death, while she supported his drooping head on her own throbbing bosom.

Julia in the mean time chafed his hands and temples with assiduous care, as she bent over the inanimate form of her lover, eagerly watching for the first symptom of returning life.

Even the hardy, desperate beings who stood near, inured as they were to every hardship, felt, deeply felt, the misery they now witnessed. With such soothing consolation, as their rude feelings and still ruder speech could dictate, they sought to cheer the minds of Julia and her friend with the hope, that proper care and timely assistance would restore the young man to life and health.

Henry Mordaunt, (for such, gentle reader, was the youthful stranger), was

borne to the Priory, whither his sister and Julia followed him; but here a most surprising incident awaited them. On entering the house, and making every inquiry as to the welfare of the female who had been taken thither, they found the whole household in the utmost confusion: Charles was no where to be found, or the servants did not know if he had returned home. The old housekeeper at length made her appearance, to account to Julia for the cause of the unusual commotion; and the strange manners of even Dawson herself might have led any one to suspect she was half mad, or had taken a cup too much that morning; for she came dancing into the room, crying and laughing in one breath.

"O Miss, I don't know if I stand or

walk; this poor old body of mine is scarce able to bear so much joy. Oh that I should live to see this day! that I should live to see my poor dear mistress again at the Priory!" said she, capering about, and yet with the tears at the same time flowing down her aged cheeks.

"Your mistress!" exclaimed the ladies, "what my aunt! what Mrs. Denningham? What can you mean, Dawson?" said they, both speaking together.

"The Lord bless me, may be I have done wrong to tell you all at once so, dear ladies," said Dawson, terrified at the effect this surprise had produced, particularly on Julia, who stood, seemingly transfixed to the spot, pale and breathless like a statue, yet eager to ascertain the

truth of what she scarcely dared to hope.

"I thought you *knowed* all about it, that my dear old mistress is come back from beyond the seas; she is now safe, thank God! though she had like never to have come to land again. Dear Miss, do ye rouse yourself; 'All's well that ends well;' and your poor aunt is up in the red damask chamber: she is quite, as it were, come to herself now."

A shriek of surprise, mingled with an incoherent exclamation of delight, convinced the old woman, that she should have been more cautious with regard to her young mistress; and not have hazarded so sudden a discovery to one so deeply interested in the fate of Mrs. Denningham.

Summoning all her fortitude in this trying excess of joy, Julia contended with her feelings on this happy event, and eagerly ran to the apartment named by Dawson: here her strength failed her; she had scarcely the power to throw herself beside the bed, on which her aunt was laid, when she fainted from the agitation, which had overcome her delicate frame.

By the kind attentions of Charles, (who was already there), and of Jane Mordaunt, Julia was soon restored to a conviction of her actual happiness, for all at first had appeared too much like a dream to be real.

The happiness, which now reigned at the Priory, was beyond what can be described. This truly worthy family were

all once more assembled within its venerable walls, and mutually blessed the merciful hand, that had, at length, after so many trials, brought them to that haven of peace and contentment.

The interview between Julia and her aunt was affecting in the extreme, but, as it is time my narrative should draw to a conclusion, I shall not enter into particulars respecting the long expected meeting between my heroine and her worthy relative; but proceed to relate the almost miraculous escape of Mrs. Denningham from the power of Danvers, who had, at length, met with the due reward of all his crimes in the punishment of an ignominious death.

CHAPTER VIII.

HENRY Mordaunt, on his arrival at the Priory, had been, by Julia and his sister, committed to the care of Mr. Denningham's valet, and some others of the household, who could at that period of joy and confusion be collected together to attend his recovery.

On the first symptoms of returning life, he had been borne from the sands on which he had sunk senseless, as before mentioned, and taken to the residence of her he loved, but of whose tender assiduity he was as yet unconscious. He had not, however, long

been an inmate of the Priory, before he was capable of appreciating his unlooked for happiness; and, not many days had elapsed, before he was sufficiently restored to health and strength, to be enabled to gratify the impatient curiosity of all parties; and to relate the whole of his proceedings at Jamaica, which had terminated so happily in his effecting the escape of Mrs. Denningham.

Henry Mordaunt had, soon after his last letter had been received in England, obtained some very important intelligence by means of a black girl, who had waited on Mrs. Denningham, while in confinement at the house of Danvers. That wretch, thinking she was too kind and attentive to the prisoner, and fearing she would discover his plot, (or effect her own and that lady's escape),

had attempted to have the poor girl murdered by one of his infamous colleagues. This villain, being more compassionate than his master, had spared her life, on condition she would contrive to get on board some vessel going from the island, so that Danvers should not discover the cheat which had been practised on him. The poor girl had applied to the masters of several vessels in the harbour, but all refused to take charge of a run-away slave: almost in despair, the wretched creature made interest with one of the crew belonging to captain Mordaunt's ship, and not as hitherto unsuccessfully: she was readily received on board, when it was understood her master would undoubtedly murder her, should she remain on the island.

On questioning her, it was afterwards found she would be of the utmost service in the plan to rescue Mrs. Denningham; for she had actually been employed, till very recently, to wait on that lady; who was then, she affirmed, secreted in the country house belonging to Danvers, and not in the cave where it had been supposed she was.

The lady, who had prevailed on Mrs. Denningham to go on shore, was a woman of bad character, whom Danvers kept as his mistress, but who had been introduced as a near relation of his, who took the charge of his house in the country, he having no wife to superintend his household. She had, under the pretence of returning some papers of importance, (which had been forgotten to be given by Mr. Danvers),

prevailed on Mrs. Denningham to accompany her to the house of a friend, where she would give her the papers alluded to, which related to her agreement relative to the transfer of the estate to the agent.

Though Mrs. Denningham had no recollection of having left any documents necessary to retain, yet she thought it advisable to be guided by her pretended friend; and, suspecting nothing, she and her female attendant accompanied Mrs. Harley to the house she had named, taking with them a small trunk, containing the papers she had then in her possession, and what money and valuables she had to take on board with her.

Danvers soon joined them, and cor-

roborated the statement of his cousin: he affected to take the greatest interest in the affairs of his late employer; and assured her, it was entirely out of regard for her and her family, that he had taken the liberty of sending for her. Pleased with his attention and plausible professions, she did not scruple to trust herself in his power; she readily acceded to his proposal, of their looking over together such documents as she had with her already: he insisted upon her taking some refreshment before she returned to the ship, which, he assured her, could not sail for that day at least, if it did the next. He artfully pretended to send down to the quay, and make every inquiry of the captain himself, that Mrs. Denningham might run no risk of their sailing without her: satisfied in this respect, she consented to

spend the day with him and Mrs. Harley. After dinner she felt a strange sensation of giddiness in her head, attended by a slight sickness of the stomach: attributing it to the heat, she thought nothing serious of this sudden complaint; but afterwards, when alone with Mrs. Harley, she said she feared she had taken the fever; but that lady only rallied her on her timidity, and, with great kindness and good humour, advised her to lie down for a little time, and by no means to check her inclination to sleep. This advice Mrs. Denningham readily accepted, overcome as she was already by the powerful drug, which had been infused in her wine after dinner; she thus unconsciously threw herself, an unresisting victim, into the power of Danvers and his vile associates; who, exulting in the success of

their schemes, took possession of the box, containing the papers notifying the sale of the estate, and the demand on his banker for the amount of the purchase. Having administered to Lucy a similar potion to that her mistress had taken, they caused these two unhappy women to be carried out of the town in the dusk of the night, and conveyed to the house in the country where Mrs. Harley usually resided: to her vigilance Danvers had given the charge of the captives, who were thus doomed to perpetual imprisonment.

When Mrs. Denningham and Lucy were awakened from the stupor which had overcome their senses, they were greatly surprised to find themselves at a considerable distance from the town: they had both been placed in the same

room, the only window in which was grated; and the door of the chamber was locked on the out-side. A black girl brought their breakfast, but would give no reply to their eager inquiries of why, and by whom they were thus forcibly detained; she only put her finger to her lip, in token of sworn secrecy and silence as to these subjects.

Day after day passed on, and no reason was assigned for their imprisonment; when at length, wearied out by vain conjecture, Mrs. Denningham entreated, by means of the black girl, that Mrs. Harley would inform her how long she was doomed to bear such wearisome bondage? Mrs. Harley, at this request, assured her, that in a month at furthest she should regain her liberty; but that Mr. Danvers had, for reasons only

known to himself, resolved to detain her and Lucy as his prisoners for that period.

Satisfied with this promise, Mrs. Denningham strove to bear her fate with resignation, and to cheer the drooping spirits of her fellow-captive, whose delicate health required every comfort she had it in her power to impart. Dreading lest their strict confinement should increase the debility already produced by the extreme heat of the climate, the worthy Mrs. Denningham, (commiserating the sufferings of the poor girl), attended her with all the tender solicitude of a parent, as well as a mistress; she felt but too conscious she had, by her own wild scheme of coming to the West Indies, risked the health and life of her two faithful at-

tendants: one had already fallen a sacrifice, and the other was but too likely to fall a victim to the change of climate, and the hardships she now endured. All this Mrs. Denningham felt might have been avoided, had she taken the advice of her friends in England: too late she acknowledged, her own misguided self-will had produced the evils she had now to encounter; and bitterly she lamented the romantic, enterprising love of novelty, which had led her to adopt so wild a scheme at her advanced age; and ignorant as she was of transacting business, it was, she owned, imprudent in the extreme to act as she had done.

Six months passed away, and they were no more likely to be released than at the first: the certainty of this was

too much for the weak spirits of the poor suffering Lucy to bear up against; she expired in the arms of her beloved mistress, after having lingered through a long and painful illness. This was a severe blow to the susceptible heart of Mrs. Denningham, who deeply lamented the untimely fate of her innocent and youthful companion, whose life had, as she considered it, been sacrificed in her service.

Sanguine as our unhappy visionary had formerly been, her ardent imagination now received a check, which nothing short of such actual misery could have produced. She felt convinced there was no hope of emancipation from the tyranny of the unprincipled Danvers, whose conduct convinced her, that all hope of mercy at his hands was vain:

he had refused to see her, and was equally firm in withholding from her the box and its contents, by which he feared she would bribe her attendant, the black girl. These, and all materials for writing, were denied her; but excepting these, she had every necessary accommodation which the limits of her prison would allow.

She sometimes was permitted, late in the evening, to take the air in the garden near the house, but was constantly attended by Mrs. Harley, the black girl, and a man in the secret of her imprisonment.

Month after month was thus spent in vain regret and unavailing tears; the recollection of the distance she then was from all who were dear to her, the cruel

manner in which she was now estranged from them, embittered every hour of her existence; till at length, becoming more resigned to her unhappy lot, she, for the sake of amusement in her tedious solitude, fell into her former habits of laying plans, and fancying schemes, all equally fruitless as to the principal object, that of obtaining her freedom. Still her active imagination could not remain idle; stratagem after stratagem was devised, which terminated in disappointment, but served to lighten the heavy load of care that oppressed her heart, and to hasten the tardy step of Time as he stole mournfully on.

Mrs. Denningham had been considerably above a year thus immured, when she observed an unusual change in the household; only the man servant waited

on her to bring the accustomed meals, and the black girl was never after seen at the prison. Mrs. Harley absented herself entirely, and the poor captive found herself more than commonly watched: she was no longer allowed to quit her apartment, and an unusual commotion seemed to pervade the whole house.

One night, not long after this bustle, Mrs. Denningham was led from her chamber, and placed, closely veiled, in a kind of litter supported on men's shoulders; her eyes were blindfolded, so that she knew not to what place they were taking her, till arrived at the verge of a forest; she was then taken from the litter; the blacks who had borne her were sent back; and she and the man, who had lately attended her, advanced

into the very thickest part of the wood. After this, he took the bandage from her eyes, and allowed her to throw off the thick veil, which had been put on by her persecutor's directions, in order that her features might not be recognised by the slaves, who had carried her so far into the forest.

Fearing her conductor had orders to murder her, Mrs. Denningham appealed to his compassion and justice; she told him, she had not been guilty of any crime; he and his master, therefore, could not be justified in taking her life, by any other law, than that of power.

The man surlily replied, that she had nothing to fear, for he had no intention to kill her, but only to put her in a place of safety; for his master had seen

some people about the house, whom he suspected were not his friends.

This last speech imparted a ray of hope to the wretched sufferer, who imagined that Danvers might be watched in his proceedings, and her retreat discovered by some emissary from England, who was come to trace her out.

Nor was she altogether deceived; for Henry Mordaunt had been for some time seeking out the place of her concealment, and justly imagined she must be still at the house of Danvers, since she was not in the cave. His people had been observed by that villain, who, fearing detection, was suspicious of every stranger seen near his dwelling: ignorant of Henry's knowledge of the cavern, he resolved to remove his pri-

soner to that secure abode, pleasing himself with the idea, that *there* she never could be traced.

His own negroes, who had been employed in conducting her, had not, he knew, even the most distant idea who was the unhappy victim of his rage; but, as her person was completely veiled, they judged her to be a female negro, who had displeased her vindictive master. The man, who accompanied Mrs. Denningham, was the slave-driver alluded to by the black girl, who had escaped on board captain Mordaunt's ship.

After some time, convinced that Mrs. Denningham was no longer at the house, Henry gave up his search, and again trusted to the advice of the black girl, what plan next to adopt; she

seemed faithful to the cause, and was besides too much in their power, to betray them to Danvers. She strongly urged, that a party should again be sent to explore the cavern; for as they were now certain she was removed from her late prison, it was probable Danvers might have had her taken to that more secure place of confinement.

Her advice was taken; and a party of sailors, with Henry at their head, went in disguise from the town to the forest, and thence to the Alligator's head; they cautiously removed some of the rubbish and pieces of wood, which lay over the entrance, to give it more the appearance of a ruined hut. Having effected this, they descended a long gloomy passage cut in the solid rock, and lighted by small chasms in the

vaulted roof; they came at last to a large and lofty apartment, in which a lamp was suspended, the feeble rays of which shone dimly on a couch at a distant part of the room: on this lay reclined a female form, apparently sunk in a profound sleep; near her stood a table, covered with a few books, and the fragment of food, which was all that remained of her scanty pittance, except a large jar partly filled with water. To their amazement, no attendant could be found in the cave, or among the adjacent rocks: this was afterwards explained by Mrs. Denningham, who, ignorant of the real purpose of the intruders, imagined they were come to conduct her back to her former prison.

Henry Mordaunt, fearing that the sudden discovery might risk either the

life or senses of the poor captive, in her then weak and emaciated state, had cautioned his men not to own who they were, or where they meant to take her.

Rejoiced beyond expression at this happy discovery, they returned from the cave; and, constructing a kind of coarse palanquin or litter, they placed Mrs. Denningham upon it, till they were in the neighbourhood of the town; then disguising her in the dress they had purposely provided, they led her to the water side, and placing her in a boat, rowed off with all dispatch to the frigate, which lay at some distance from the shore.

Worn out by grief, and wearied with her late exertions, Mrs. Denningham suffered herself to be taken wherever

her guards chose, without the least resistance or complaint; nor was she conscious that she was then escaped from the tyranny of Danvers, till she found herself safe on board an English frigate.

The sudden thought then flashed on her mind, that she was once more in safety, and surrounded by her friends; joy too great for utterance throbbed in her bosom, as she knelt on the deck, and raised her clasped hands, and tearful eyes, in gratitude to Heaven and her deliverers.

She was taken below, and a promise given her by the captain, that he would explain all to her, if she would first take some refreshment and rest after her great fatigue. The first request she

could obey, but the second was impossible, while she remained ignorant to whom she owed her liberty.

Finding this to be the case, Henry took off his disguise, and appearing to her in his usual dress, briefly explained the means by which he had effected her escape. This, and the pleasing intelligence he gave her of Julia and Charles, imparted a balm to her wounded spirit, more soothing than all else that could be given: tears of joy gave relief to her full heart, as she gratefully acknowledged the services of Henry, whom she beheld with all the fondness of parental affection, added to the liveliest emotions of gratitude.

Captain Mordaunt, having obtained full proof of the villany of Danvers,

immediately proceeded against him by the means of a professional gentleman, whose acquaintance he had gained during the time of his being stationed off Jamaica. By confronting the negro girl with Danvers, there appeared such evidence of his guilt, as to bring the just punishment of his crimes on his own guilty head, by the means of the very people he had injured: he was immediately forced to restore the papers and other valuables he had robbed Mrs. Denningham of.

The vile accomplice of his atrocious deeds, was the first to accuse his master, and impeached him of a murder committed on one of his slaves some years before. The wretch hoped, by thus impeaching his master of all he could lay to his charge, that he himself might

escape, by a pardon given in consideration of the discovery he had made; for the murdered slave had belonged to Mrs. Denningham, among the number employed on her estates.

Danvers was tried and condemned; no interest availed him, so evident, so aggravated, was his guilt; and he had made too many enemies on the island, to hope for the intercession of any real friend in his behalf. He was executed previous to captain Mordaunt's quitting the West Indies; and as his purchase of the estate, belonging to Mrs. Denningham, had been cancelled, she accordingly concluded an agreement with a gentleman, who had considerable property adjoining, and to whom her lands would be of more value than to any other. Having sold the whole very advantage-

ously, and been paid the arrears due from the heir who came into the possession of Danvers's property, Mrs. Denningham was impatient to return to England, and waited only till the fleet should sail, to quit the detested shores of Jamaica.

Captain Mordaunt being appointed to convoy the merchantmen to Bristol, in company with several other ships of war, offered his friend a passage on board his ship, which she gladly accepted for herself, and pleaded with him for the poor black girl, who had in part been the means of her escape; she accompanied Mrs. Denningham, but unhappily had since perished, with several of the crew, in trying to escape from the wreck.

The weather had been so very tempestuous, that many of the fleet had been scattered; and the frigate, which Henry Mordaunt had the command of, had previously sustained so severe an engagement with a French ship of war, that it was doubtful if they could bring her into port; in a very disabled condition she was overtaken by the tremendous storm already mentioned, which so disastrously wrecked her on the coast of Devonshire, as she was proceeding up the channel to Bristol.

As soon as Mrs. Denningham and captain Mordaunt were sufficiently recovered from their late suffering, to enjoy the festivity that generally prevailed, a grand entertainment was given to all ranks, in commemoration of the

happy event, which had restored their long absent relatives to their family and friends. In this heartfelt rejoicing none more cordially joined than the worthy Morland, who became an almost constant inmate of the Priory. Charles Denningham had, on his return, offered him a living of considerable value, (which it was in his power, by means of a friend, to obtain for him;) but this the humble pastor declined accepting, from his unwillingness to quit his present flock, with whom he had resided for so many years: this, and his attachment to the Denningham family, determined him to remain at the village of Westcombe, which was not much above a mile from the Priory.

On persisting in this resolution, he hinted significantly, that there was a

possibility he might have yet other reasons for wishing to remain at Westcombe.

"And what other inducement can this secluded place offer, beside those you have already named?" inquired Mrs. Denningham.

"The hope that I shall soon have the honour of uniting two worthy couple in the holy bands of matrimony, if you can guess whom I mean," said he with an arch smile, which suffused the countenances of Julia and Jane with the vivid blush of self consciousness.

After they had quitted the room, Mrs. Denningham had some more explicit conversation with Morland on this subject, and declared that nothing could

gratify her more, than to see her nephew and niece well married; that, as she approved of their choice, no obstacle presented itself; and that when the parties concerned should name the day, she would be willing to sanction their union with her full approbation. She had, she said, by the recovery of her West India property, amply sufficient to bestow a handsome portion on Julia, and Jane was already well provided for by the will of her late uncle. Charles would have the Priory estates, beside a considerable sum of money she would present him with on his marriage, provided he would give up all idea of returning to India (at least till after her death), as it would make her miserable to be obliged to be separated from her family again; old as she was, it was

vain to hope to see him more, should he quit England.

Mrs. Denningham added, that she wished him and Jane to live with her at the Priory, which would so soon be their own; and Julia and Henry Mordaunt should, if they approved of her plan, purchase a most delightful residence in the immediate neighbourhood of Westcombe: she should thus be enabled to divide her time between the two families; and the latter days of her life would be blessed as formerly, in the society of her beloved and affectionate children.

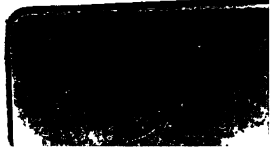
On this arrangement being explained to the young people, they readily acceded to the wishes of Mrs. Denning-

ham; and Charles was prevailed on to give up all thoughts of aggrandizement in India, in consideration of his affection for his aunt and Julia.

"But dear aunt," said he, "if I consent to your proposal, what will become of the embassy, and the Persian manuscript?"

"You are a saucy bold fellow, thus to make a jest of your poor old aunt!" said Mrs. Denningham; "but I have learnt, by dear bought experience, to be less romantic in my notions, and to be content with the *every day* occurrences of life, without wishing and planning *utter improbabilities*, as I once did. I have now relinquished castle-building, Charles: I leave those airy phantoms to the imagination of the young, and the

giddy votaries of wild caprice! It is time for me to give up these follies, and put my trust in that blessed hope, which alone is beyond the power of man to frustrate."

THE END.

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